THE MAKING OF THE BIBLE

SAMUEL M. VERNON

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THE MAKING OF THE BIBLE

BY
SAMUEL M. VERNON

THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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CHAPTER I

THE WORLD WITHOUT A BIBLE

The Bible was not given to man at the beginning of his career. Only after the lapse of many centuries did it appear, as product and instrument of the growing life of the race. When it did come, it was not one sudden burst of light, but it crept in softly, little by little, as the mind of man slowly readjusted itself to its changing conditions and new method of receiving divine revelations. It was one of the later methods chosen by God for manifesting himself to men. That religion of the highest order and ethical conduct of the finest quality were possible without the Bible was proven by the unanswerable argument that they existed and flourished through long periods and among different nations before there was a Bible. That a Bible was not given is sufficient evidence that it was not necessary to the well-being and religious development of the race in the beginning; God had other and adequate methods.

If it had been best for man, God could have given him a written revelation at the first, a perfect guidebook for his conduct which he could not misunderstand. That he did not do it is proof that he considered another form of revelation more effective and better for man's religious development. The appeal must be more direct, and the personal contact closer and more manifest than would have been possible in a written revelation. Man's nature was untrained and undeveloped, and a powerful direct appeal was necessary to awaken a desire for the knowledge of God and for communion with him.

If it is objected that writing was not in use at first, and, therefore, a written revelation was impossible, it may be answered that this is pure assumption. We do not know but that with the gift or development of language there was included a knowledge or development of the art of reading and writing. If that gift was not included in man's outfit for life, it could have been, and certainly would have been, if it had been necessary to his proper instruction in religious knowledge and duties.

Such a gift would have been no more miraculous than were the special direct revelations that were necessary from time to time because of the absence of a written code. It is the unchallenged fact of history that the Creator and Governor of all things, who had power to do whatsoever he saw to be needful to the well-being of man "for whom all creation stood," stopped short in his work without giving him a book of revelation. This must have been because he saw it would be better to use those methods of revelation which history has so fully justified and which our reason can see were better for the race in the early stages of its development than a written book could have been. How long that period was before the beginning of a written revelation is unknown. It was certainly much longer than the traditional view, founded on the unscholarly chronology for which Archbishop Usher is largely responsible, makes it. Recent discoveries in archæology, in the uncovering of the cities and monuments of antiquity, make it certain that that period must have been from four to eight thousand years, possibly

longer, a period of sufficient length to justify the statement that the Bible is comparatively a modern development.

During that long prebiblical period the word of the Lord was not wanting; it filled the earth, but in other forms than that in which we have it. Through all that time, as in every other period of human history, according to Saint Paul's argument on the subject, "God left not himself without witness," nor ever could leave himself without a sufficient declaration of himself and of his will for the guidance of men in religious knowledge and duty. It is one of the illustrations of our perverse tendency to narrowness of thought in such matters that we are disposed to think that because the written revelation seems essential to us, it must have been so in that early age before the entanglements of history and our more complex life had arisen. But the conclusive evidence that such a revelation was not necessary is the fact that it was not given. It would certainly be a defective administration of the world that would withhold at the beginning of history, when the race was

forming character and determining its course, the ministries and agencies that would be most helpful to it in getting upon the right course. To suggest that he withheld anything that would have contributed increased knowledge or moral strength in that formative period of human life in the earth is to charge God with responsibility for those evils against which he inveighs so earnestly and to which he attributes the sufferings of this life. To that early period he gave such revelations as the conditions required, and such as would make the strongest appeal to man's nature and be most likely to receive a favorable response from him.

The historical records give us but brief account of that early period, but what we have is very suggestive on the subject we are considering. There is an account of a man whose knowledge of God and whose love for him was so great that he was permitted to walk with God for three hundred years, if we accept the biblical account of patriarchal long life, and finally to go to live with him without passing through the shaded gateway of death. He lived before

the time and without the aid of the Bible. There was another of whom it was said that he "walked with God," whose character was so good that he was selected out of the whole race as the one most worthy to be saved from the world-destroying flood and to be the new progenitor of the race. Noah lived and died without knowing even that there ever was to be a Bible. Methuselah made his long pilgrimage without any written records to guide him, and yet seems to have been well-pleasing to God. The great father of the faithful who was called "the friend of God," who stands at the head of the line of believing souls, and whose spiritual children all true believers are, than whom no better character has appeared in all the annals of history, even Abraham, who by simple goodness towers above and sheds a beneficent moral influence over the ages, came from what we would call a pagan land, where there was neither Bible nor church. There was a way then of nourishing a soul in such beauty and richness of moral excellence that all Bible-taught and church-sheltered souls must still look to him as "the father

of the faithful." In the outlook to the future which God gave Abraham nothing is said of a coming book or a rising church, but only of a "seed," in which all the earth should be blessed, and in which book and church lay implicit as parts of that blessing which all the world was to receive through the "seed," which was Christ. The revelation he then had was adequate to the needs of such an exalted character, and it gave him a satisfying outlook to the future.

Out of that great prehistoric period another remarkable specimen of its high religious characters dips for a moment into our atmosphere to give us a decided mental shock and to suggest that we have but little conception of the glories of that early period of splendid living when man walked and talked with God. All after times have been stirred with curiosity about the person, high religious offices, and priestly character of Melchisedec. The only contact he has with our modern life is through the single incident recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. He is here reported to have met Abraham on his return

from the slaughter of the kings and to have accepted tithes from Abraham. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews takes up the incident and argues from it that Melchisedec must have been a greater religious character than Abraham, for the payment of tithes to him by Abraham was an acknowledgment of his superiority. In developing his argument about the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ he says it was "after the order of Melchisedec." That seems to give him a religious and official standing above that of any of the great characters in the history of Israel. This suggests to us the possible riches in religious character of that unreported, prehistoric age that found ample religious instruction and guidance without a written revelation. Another pagan who does not rise quite so high in character, yet who gives evidence of being a real prophet of the Lord, is Baalam. While his religious character and career were not the best, they do show how widespread was the prophetic office and the religious teaching which it furnished.

The structure of Bible teaching is such

as to imply the existence of the conditions here outlined. Everywhere it is assumed that men know of the being of God and are accustomed to the exercises of religion. Nowhere is the being of God asserted or argued. There is no attempt to prove that or the other great truths of religion. The first verse of the Bible assumes the whole case by simply saying, "In the beginning God created," without stopping to announce, define, or prove the being of God. That was a well-known and generally accepted fact. It had passed the need of any formal statement or proof. The same was true concerning the being and activity in human affairs of angels; they move out on the theater of action in human affairs as though they had long been known and their mission understood and needed no introduction at the late period when biblical writings began.

If we consider the circumstances of man's early life on the planet, we can see that a highly religious life might be maintained without a written revelation. He was created with such intellectual and spiritual powers as would naturally awaken aspira-

tions and soul-hunger that would lead him to seek after God. Placed in the midst of the mechanism and active forces of the material universe, with the arching heavens above him and the smiling earth about him, his inquisitive mind would begin at once to ask how all this came to be and how it was maintained, and he never would rest till he had an answer to these questions. His spiritual aspirations, soul-longings, and consciousness of the powers and possibilities of his being would lead him out toward God. The human mind was constructed with reference to this environment, with powers and appetencies that when properly used would lead to the apprehension and knowledge of the truth.

The watchmaker carefully studies the mechanism, the force needed to drive the machinery, the method of its application, the possibilities of repair and readjustment, and finally brings forth a creation that works out a given result with remarkable precision and continuity; it was made to attain that result. It may need much care, frequent windings, and occasional repairs, but all that is provided for and adapted to

the intelligence that is supposed to use it. It was constructed with reference to its own powers and the capabilities of those who were to have the care of it. We cannot think that God was less thoughtful for man when forming him with his complex nature of body, soul, and spirit to run a course of development and broadening activities through the centuries. He must have carefully computed the force of animal appetites and propensities, of such mental endowments as reason, imagination, and will, and of the equipment of the soul with the gift of conscience, spiritual aspirations, and hunger for God, intending to keep himself in close, helpful, and directing relations to him. Had not some evil influence come in from without, like a grain of sand thrown into the mechanism of a watch, no doubt man would have run his course as faithfully as any timepiece ever made by man's less skillful art. Notwithstanding the perverting and corrupting influence of the evil that entered the race by sin, we must believe that through all those prebiblical ages the phenomena of the natural universe, and the activities, aspirations,

and impulses of the mind of man, aided and guided by the revelations given to him, were sufficient to lead him to the knowledge of all necessary truth.

The visitations of angels seems to have served the race, as written revelations have served it in the later centuries, for imparting truth and spiritual inspiration. The very first step from Eden out into the thorn-producing world was under the direction of one of the seraphim with a drawn sword to give suggestion of a punitive administration of government henceforth, with what verbal instruction we are not informed. Angels appeared to Hagar in the wilderness, to Abraham under the Oaks of Mamre, where they revealed the doom of Sodom and lifted the veil of the future from the coming glories of his family. They appeared to Lot in Sodom, they came to carry Elijah home, and they stood guard about Elisha when menaced by a great army. In all the great events of Bible history prior to the completion of the written revelation angels had an important part in revealing, counseling, and directing. As a method of revelation it

was most impressive and had immediate effect.

In many cases God himself seems to have spoken directly to men, concealing himself, but declaring his purpose and his person. Thus he spoke to Noah concerning the Flood, giving him directions for building the ark, for collecting within it the living creatures, and his purpose of cleansing the earth by means of the Deluge. He spoke directly to Moses out of the burning bush, giving directions for his visits to Pharaoh, at various times in the journey toward Canaan, and in the closing scenes of his life. How frequent, and in how many different parts of the earth, these personal revelations may have been in that prebiblical period we have no means of knowing. They reached Abraham in Mesopotamia before there was any chosen family or redemptive race, while he belonged to what we would now call a pagan people. Such revelations reached Melchisedec, Baalam, and others. If they were made at all, that is proof that they were possible and expedient, and that they would be made as often as the needs of the race

required. One such direct communication from God would be repeated by men over wide districts and would have a permanent and potent influence.

In addition to these methods of conveying truth to men, tradition must have been a very important means of disseminating and preserving the knowledge of God. The long life of the antediluvians, free from the excitements and business activity of modern life, was favorable to the correct transmission of truth by tradition. Methuselah was the contemporary of Adam and Noah, if we accept the Bible account of his long life, so that Noah might hear from the lips of Methuselah what was told him by Adam, so that the stories of creation and of the garden of Eden passed through but one person to reach Noah. The wonderful character of the events, and of the divine manifestations in connection with them, would insure a deep and lasting impression on the minds of those participating in them and great care in reporting them.

After the beginning of Hebrew history God appealed to and seems to have depended upon this method of disseminating

and perpetuating the truth. He commanded parents to diligently teach the facts of their miraculous history to their children: "And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The accuracy and reliability of the human memory when it is fully trusted and charged with the responsibility of preserving important truth cannot be doubted. Before we had spoiled our memories by distrusting them and making written records of facts that once would have been committed to their safekeeping great feats of memory were very common. Conspicuous among these, to mention but one case, was the fact that blind Homer went from city to city in Greece reciting to wondering crowds the matchless periods of his immortal epic.

With all these different methods employed for the instruction of men there must have come to them very clear and convincing declarations of truth on all important subjects. Our knowledge of the

character and purposes of God, as well as the few glimpses given us of the wonderful religious characters of prebiblical times, seem to warrant the conclusion that there were ample revelations of truth in forms more effective than written documents would have been.

CHAPTER II

A BIBLE BECOMES NECESSARY

The changing conditions of the world made a change of method in dealing with it necessary. When the race had grown out of its primitive state, its larger intelligence and broadening fields of action and its more complex life made necessary a fuller revelation with better ordered and more enduring institutions to conserve its religious life. Nations were multiplying, complicated conditions were arising, racial forces were moving more vigorously, a keener mental analysis and a more searching philosophy were dealing with the questions of life and being that were forever pressing for solution, and a clearer, fuller revelation of truth was required to meet the growing needs of the race. Historical facts were liable to become distorted and corrupted by being carried too long in the rather loose form of tradition. Moral and doctrinal teachings would be more uniform and less liable to perversion if they were

committed to a changeless form in written documents.

There was, however, a yet greater and more pressing need for a written form of revelation. There was to be introduced a complex and supernatural redemptive system that would require careful and elaborate statement with luminous expositions easily accessible. The great moral duties and the essential elements of religion might be sufficiently made known by the voice of conscience, the light of nature, and the special revelations that God gave to men; but the entrance of Deity into a human body and life, the sacrificial and atoning death of that divine-human Person, the possible entrance of the divine into every human life with regenerating and sanctifying power, and the cooperation in this of three divine Persons in the unity of the Godhead, of whom hitherto there had been no clear revelation—all this would seem to require a definite and full written statement, that there might be a proper apprehension and clear understanding of these great truths.

Great preparations were made to give

this revelation a proper setting and a position of strength for its appeal to the human mind. A special family was set apart to project a new nation of people into the stream of history, consecrated to a high and peculiar mission, to embody and express in its own history and national development the great idea of redemption in a succession of educating events and institutions leading up to the manifestation from its own national line of the great Redeemer, the God-man. Such was to be the dignity of his person and the glory of his work that there should be centuries of heraldry going before—incidents, covenants, institutions, and prophetic declarations, which when he should appear would be found to have been a declaration of the fact and character of his Messiahship. That long line of history was to clear a highway for the coming of the Son of God, into the very structure of which would be wrought evidences and proofs of his Messiahship, of its character and purpose, to which he would perfectly answer in his career of teaching, suffering, and death, giving proof of him that could not be re-

sisted by the unprejudiced mind. This race of people was segregated from the rest of the world, shut up to the culture and guardianship of its great idea which was the center of its life and the reason for its being, and to hold the deposit of truth given to it which it was unconsciously to expound and confirm in its history. There was to be little commerce or commingling with other nations, lest the purity and sacredness of this deposit should be corrupted. This is the teaching of Saint Paul, when he asks, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" He answers his own question by saying, "Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God," that is, the spoken and written revelation, the institutions and the ceremonies of religion, prefiguring and announcing the coming Messiah. This is the fact of history, that while the revelation was being made, and until it reached its culmination in the manifested person of Him who was its life and soul, and for the declaration of whom it was given—while this process was going

on, the people within whom it was coming to manifestation were sheltered by the divine covenant and guardianship in a separate and sacred position where no enemy could destroy them nor thwart the purpose of God till it came to glorious realization.

This throws a flood of light on God's constancy in caring for fickle, backsliding Israel. How he could have borne with them in their lapses, rebellions, and apostasies, holding to them as his peculiar people, bringing them back from their captivities, and reestablishing them in Jerusalem, appears only when we remember that he had selected them as the organ and instrument for manifesting his Son to the world. He could not change in the midst of the process from one people to another when the line of evidences and of revelation was half finished, but must continue to use a poor instrument till the work for which it was taken in hand was finished, especially as the identity of the instrument was the voucher for the integrity of the work. When the work was done and Messiah had been manifested to the

world, Israel had completed its divinely appointed mission of preparing the way for the coming of Messiah. There have been no divine interpositions to bring them back to Jerusalem since Messiah was revealed.

This fundamental purpose in the calling of Israel is made clear in the terms of the instituting covenant with Abraham. God promised Abraham that he should have a numerous progeny, "as the stars of heaven for multitude," and that in his "seed all nations should be blessed." Saint Paul calls attention to the fact that the singular number is here used, and that the term "seed" refers to Christ, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The whole redemptive scheme, therefore, lay implicit in that covenant with Abraham. That was the root idea, the formative germ of the whole Hebrew history and polity, their only reason for being, their justification and explanation.

This new epoch in world development and race culture in religious knowledge and life made new agencies and methods necessary.

A BIBLE BECOMES NECESSARY

The proposition that God should actually come down among men and become incorporated into the life of the race by taking on himself a human body, being born of a woman that he might redeem and sanctify the whole body of humanity, was a scheme so vast that it would justify two thousand years of educational preparation and notification, and the introduction of a more permanent and adequate method for announcing and expounding the facts of this great redemptive movement in written records, such as we have in the Bible. The Holy Scriptures were one element in the development of the holy "seed" that was to be a blessing to "all nations." If not the greatest, these writings are one of the richest blessings that have come to the nations out of that covenant with Abraham. As soon as the great redemptive idea kindled the intelligence of man with larger and brighter thoughts about God and concerning his own being and destiny, the impulse to record, expound, and prophesy must have come into the soul of man as an impelling inspiration. This lifted the ethical and spiritual nature of

man above the domain of nature and natural suggestion could no longer minister adequately to these higher reaches of life; the divine life coming into fellowship and alliance with the life of man made necessary the incoming of divine truth in larger measure than nature could give. Special divine revelations would no longer be adequate, for the broader fields of knowledge now opening to the minds of men and the larger development of the nations would invite and insure careful scrutiny and earnest discussion that could not be successfully conducted without written documents that could be compared with each other and with known facts. This wonderful system of redemption, that burst forth like a new dawn on the world's growing intelligence, would require ample statement and exposition in forms that could be pondered and studied. Nature is quite silent here. She has no voice pitched to the key of redemption; her register does not include the high notes of redeeming love. Even an angel's jubilant song is not sufficient unless it can be recorded, so that the mind of man may turn to it often when

nature seems dry and empty. The high and transcendental are so woven in with the low and natural that we should be whelmed in endless confusion and perplexity if we had not "a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed," that is ever accessible for our enlightenment and instruction. The work of redemption makes a personal appeal and contemplates a personal life unto holiness that makes necessary a daily counselor in righteousness and truth such as the Bible is. The noble living, the world-girdling service, and the missionary efforts of the Christian men of this age would not be possible but for the instruction and inspiration that come out of the book.

Yet it is a most delicate thing to give such a revelation as is here supposed, for rules of safety themselves create great danger by leading to overmuch confidence in them when conditions arise to which they do not apply, and by disarming that watchfulness and care which are the best guarantees of safety. If the Bible had been intended to be a guidebook in the

sense that it would tell us just what to do —how often to pray, how often to fast, how much to give, with all the other details of a good life—it could all have been done plainly, so that there could have been no mistake, in a document not larger than one of Saint Paul's epistles, but it would have been a false leading, a betrayal of humanity in its most sacred interests. Humanity would have rotted in moral decay and spiritual death under such a system. The revelation must be in such a form as respects and preserves man's freedom, and develops his sense of responsibility for seeking, finding, and interpreting the truth, and for applying general principles to individual acts. It is necessary for man's spiritual and intellectual development to place the truth, as God has placed the gold, the grains, and the fruits of the earth, where we must search and dig to get it. Hence revelation comes to us, like the narrow veins of gold that run high up over the crest of the mountains and can be reached only by hard climbing and keen-eyed vision, tucked away in scraps of history, bits of poetry,

sparkling proverbs, thrilling dramas, deep-toned, far-sounding prophecies, fascinating love stories, charming epistolary letters to friends, and world-embracing apocalyptic visions.

That written revelation synchronizes with the history of redemption, that it was part of its machinery and equipment, and that its great necessity rose out of it, appears not only in the fact that it began under Moses, who first gave the redemptive movement organized form, that its writers were limited to the redemptive people, and that redemption both of Israel and of the world was its distinguishing and predominant theme, but also by the fact that the volume of written revelation closed with the recording and exposition of the events connected with the culmination of that history of redemption in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. When redemption was completed, written revelation was finished.

The maledictions pronounced upon anyone who should presume to add anything to what had been written in the time of the apostles seems also to confirm this

view of the interdependence of written revelation and developing redemption. The book is the herald and the witness of the Son, the God-man.

CHAPTER III

NECESSARY LIMITATIONS TO A REVELATION

So long as it was possible for man to dig out the truth as it lay buried in the facts of nature and of his own being, or to find it by lifting up his soul to God, it was better for him that he should be left without a written revelation. Nothing contributes more to man's development than searching for the truth, keeping himself in the love of the truth that he may find it, and holding himself *en rapport* with his environment and with God, that he may discover and know the truth. The search for it in an educational and disciplinary way is almost of equal value to its possession. The fact that God did not give man a written revelation till so many centuries after his appearance on the earth is the most conclusive evidence that it was not best for him to have it. We cannot sound the depths of the divine plans, yet there are apparent many rea-

sons why it was better for man to be led into the temple of truth by the diligence of his own effort and the fidelity of his spirit in the search for it.

Help that is not necessary is a hindrance. We make people paupers, destroy their self-respect, and deny them the development that is attained only by effort by giving them help when they could and should help themselves. Many teachers dwarf instead of developing the minds of their pupils by solving the hard problems for them and lifting them over heights where they should develop their muscles by climbing. Many parents keep their children babies forever by satisfying all their needs and shielding them from the toil and struggle that makes strong men. That toiling boy whom you pity for the hardness of his lot will some day live in a palace which he has earned, while your pampered son will be spending on a worthless life money that he did not earn. The race would never have grown out of its infancy if God had given to man a full revelation of the truth at the first. He left man to find out the boundaries of the continents and

the seas, and to discover the spherical form of the earth and the forces of nature by exploration and scientific study. He waited for man to discover steam power and electricity because it ministered to human development to wrestle with the problems of creation, to track the forces of nature to their hiding places and devise a method for bringing them forth and harnessing them to the machinery of life for manufacture and transportation. It is an affecting spectacle to see man footsore and weary trudging over the mountains, bearing his heavy burdens on his shoulders, while in his own home puffing steam was trying to make itself articulate in its crude language to tell him that it was there to do his work and to run his errands for him. But still he preferred to work his muscle and let his brain lie dormant in a stupor that to us seems incredible. God would not tell him the truth he ought to discern for himself. Electricity kindled its bonfires in the sky at night to notify him it was there; it ran about the heavens in zigzag fire to show its speed of movement; it shook the earth with its thunder peals

to suggest its power; it smote men dead and threw their charred corpses across the path of industry in its appeal to them to awake and call it into their service; and still they only cringed with fear and whined about the hardness of their lot. God would not tell them if they were so stupid as not to read these indications. He waited that man might have the benefit of thinking, the growing confidence of conquest, and the enlarging self-respect of achievement. Discovery was better than revelation. It holds true in the moral and spiritual realm also. It is better for men to seek the truth, to inquire and pray for it, to long for it; then when they find it they have already risen to a state of mind to make a wise use of it.

It is quite impossible for men to understand and appreciate the truth unless they have this spirit of inquiry and the disposition to search for it. This principle was clearly announced to Isaiah when he received his commission as a prophet, and it is quoted by Jesus as an explanation of the dullness of the Jews in understanding his parables. When Isaiah had his won-

derful temple vision, it was said to him, after he had offered himself for a messenger of the Lord, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." Jesus teaches that he used parables for this very purpose of concealing the truth from those who did not love it and long for it, lest they would insult it and trample it under their feet. The same principle was illustrated in our Lord's refusal to gratify the curiosity of the Pharisees by working a miracle to be seen of them, as they would look on any trick of legerdemain. It is a profanation of the truth to handle it lightly, to treat it irreverently; therefore it is placed where it can be reached only by sincerity, effort, and honesty of purpose. It is not flung out heedlessly like pearls before swine, lest they trample it under their feet, not knowing or caring what it is, and then turn about to destroy the very agencies that gave it to them. Like all of God's gifts, truth is so placed that we must seek it if we would find it, and we must love it if we would understand it. We must dig in the soil to get God's gift

of bread, blast the quartz to get his gift of gold, and so must we break off the shell that enfolds the kernel of the truth if we would possess it. There is this hiding of the truth in the very form of its revelation to protect it from too familiar handling by irreverent and unsympathetic minds. "Clouds and darkness are round about him," and he hideth even his truth wondrously from the eyes of the curious and the proud. This limitation is put upon the whole system of revelation, even upon the grandest expression of it in the person of our Lord, "God manifested in the flesh." The truth was so hidden under forms of flesh and common life that carnal men could not see it, nor could they discern the fineness of his spirit nor understand the meaning of his simple words. They misjudged him because they hated him, while the Simeons and the Annas recognized and hailed him with joy as the Messiah. It was the divine wisdom expressing itself according to this uniform principle, to put the truth in its highest expression in a form to be recognized only by the lovers of truth. Others said, "He

hath a devil, why hear ye him?" This they said because the spirit of the devil was in them, and, according to our principle, they could see only what was in themselves. We often complain that revelation is not more clear, that God does not disclose himself more positively in the moral conflicts of life, that truth is not put beyond the possibility of cavil, but the interests of truth itself and of the souls of men are served by thus placing it so that we come to know it only as we rise to the spirit that would make a proper use of it, and not turn its possession to evil account.

It is well to reflect also that there are many things that we cannot know fully in our present state without spoiling the beauty and symmetry of our earthly lives. We could not know all the glories of the heavenly life without unhinging our working force here, and destroying our appreciation and interest in things of the present life. It is much better for our earthly lives that "we know in part," that we should have but a dim outline of the future world, till our work in this world

is done. It is also better for our moral development, for it is hardly possible that purely moral considerations could have a fair field if there were revelations of future conditions that would practically coerce the mind. The mind must be kept free from overpowering constraints, or from revelations that would practically leave us no option; the highest moral action requires absolute freedom. We never get a fair test of a child's obedience while we stand over it with a rod in our hands.

Thus also the sanctity and dignity of the truth are maintained by putting it beyond the reach of profane and captious minds. It is placed in such relations to us as to give us intimations of its existence, of its character, and of the method of approach to it, but we can really possess it only by loving it, working for it, and exercising sincerity and honesty of purpose toward it. It is plainly declared by Saint Paul that the higher truths cannot be known by the carnal mind. He says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness

unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." We must rise to their level before we can know them, and have hearts worthy of them before they will take up their abode within us. The truth seeks its level as water does, and is sure to find it. It is therefore natural that as men rise in moral elevation and spirituality their knowledge of truth broadens and becomes more satisfying. There are inner chambers of truth to be entered only by those who have proven themselves worthy of it by their fidelity to the more primary revelation. The truth is of value only to those who will use it properly, therefore it is revealed in such forms as to become accessible only to those who have the spirit to make such use of it. We often wonder why revelation is not plainer, why we must read so much history, biography, poetry, parables, and epistles to get at it; and even then much of it is vague, involved, and hard to be understood. This is the honey in the rock which no man can get without climbing for it; and he will not climb for it unless he really desires it. There is a sacred trinity of

revelation, holding the truth in triple form before the mind of man—in nature, in man's mysterious being and life, and in the Word. The Word made flesh and the Word made fact, or expressing fact, were both from the same source and are closely related in nature and office. A veil of flesh and of form in the putting is thrown over both, that their sanctity may appear only to those who are prepared in spirit to do them reverence. The audience chamber of the King is thus protected from rude and irreverent intrusion. Such jealous regard for the sanctity of the truth on the part of its Author only enhances its value in the eyes of men and intensifies their desire and search for it.

This is one of the glories of revelation, one of the proofs of its genuineness, that it is thus limited and held in reserve. Just enough is given to show man his duty in plain speech that cannot be misunderstood and to excite his interest to learn more if he is sincerely desiring to know the truth; then the vast fields of truth lie open for his exploration and discovery. God must conceal himself behind his works, and veil

his truth in forms that require study. We often wonder in the thick of the fight, especially when the battle goes against us, why God does not come forth and show himself and thus give victory to the cause of righteousness. We hear the buffeted and baffled patriarch of Uz saying in his distress: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! . . . Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." God himself has declared that no man can see his face and live, and certainly his presence would so awe and overpower us that there could be no freedom or naturalness of action, and hence no proper development of character. He must withhold such a manifestation of himself as would be disturbing to the natural forces with which he has endowed man, his appetites, aspirations, reason, imagination, and will. Many truths too baldly stated would be disturbing and hurtful rather than helpful. Thus Saint Paul, in his First Epistle to the Thessa-

lonians, said some very plain and strong things about the second coming of Christ. Many of the Thessalonians were greatly excited and disturbed by what he said and ran to extremes in their preparation for the event, even giving up all business, ceasing to work, and going about as "busybodies" because they expected the immediate coming of the Lord. So that in his second epistle he had to warn them not to be "shaken in mind, or be troubled," as "by letter from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." The light was too strong for the eye and had to be shaded by throwing over the truth an indefiniteness as to time and circumstances of the great event, that the mind might resume its normal working.

The possibility of failure to arrive at the exact truth because of this obscurity in some of its presentations cannot endanger the salvation of the soul, for judgment is to be in proportion to the light we have. If no man was to be saved but he who had full knowledge of the truth, none would be saved, for no one ever yet had such knowledge. Our judgment will be "according to

that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

The revelation was given by an omniscient Being, who must have foreseen how it would be misunderstood, and he could have stated it in tabular form, like the Decalogue, so as to have avoided these misunderstandings. Our creed-makers had that much ability. When our Lord prayed that his disciples might be "one," he must have foreseen the divisions and misunderstandings that were so soon to arise. In no more words than are required to utter that prayer he could forever have rendered impossible the Arian controversy, the heresy of Pelagius, the controversy about the primacy of Saint Peter, the right of the pope of Rome to rule Christendom; and many other questions that have disturbed the peace of the church could have been settled or their very consideration rendered impossible. But he saw clearly that it was better for man's intellectual and spiritual development to leave the truth in the form in which we have it, rather than to remand man to an infantile state by doing his thinking for him and

taking from him the necessity to struggle and contend for the truth. It is a great moral sieve, sifting out the unworthy, the captious, the insincere, the designing, and the false, as Saint Paul teaches when he says, "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." The heresies taught in Corinth, that seemed to give so much trouble, performed that useful office of sifting the wheat from the chaff.

It was evidently the design in giving a revelation that a close and vital relation should be maintained between every soul of man and the Holy Ghost for spiritual power, illumination, and guidance "into all truth." This was the clear teaching of the Master in his address to the disciples on the personality and offices of the Holy Spirit, as recorded by Saint John. He teaches that it would be better for him to go away, that spiritual teaching and illumination might take the place of the formal words he was uttering, and that independent thinking under the guidance of the Holy Ghost would be far better for them

and the church for all time than to have a visible leader to whom they could go with questions when any difficult matter arose. Inward illumination is better than pedagogy.

The Bible is the norm and formal statement of the truth, but its interpretation and application to the individual life must be by the conscience and judgment illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. The Word was inspired by the Spirit, and it should be read with a consciousness of that fact and with the prayer that the inspiring Spirit should become the interpreter of the Word. He knows what was intended in the writing and he can make its meaning plain. Therefore prayer for the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit has always been considered an essential to proper Bible-reading. The casual, the critical, or the careless reader may get very little and see very little significance in this revelation if it is read without this spiritual light upon it, for revelation is not in the book alone, but upon the book and upon the mind of man that it may reach the understanding aright. Revelation is a

perpetual, ever-active movement of the Spirit of God, never finished and never suspended, if not in giving new truth, then in throwing new light on the old according to the needs of men. We greatly dishonor the Holy Spirit and his offices among men if we suppose him less active now than at any former period. The interests involved are greater, the conditions of human life are more complex, the population of the world is larger, the progress of the kingdom of God is more rapid, and unless he has given up the field entirely the activities of the Spirit must be greater than at any former time. The flow of truth from the divine to the human mind must be as constant as that of sunlight from the sun, or of the air which we breathe, if man is to have the freshness and vigor of divine truth for his spiritual life.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAKING OF THE CANON

The Old Testament

The Bible was an unconscious growth. Probably no one book was written with any thought that it would become a part of a sacred canon. The writers generally wrote under some immediate spur or impulse, on some local issues, or to meet some pressing contemporaneous need. If they had known the prominence and influence their writings were to have in the coming ages, they would have been self-conscious and incapable of responding perfectly to the movements of the Divine Spirit. It would not be possible for any human mind to have such an expectation with respect to its productions without being powerfully affected by it, and probably without being incapable of the simplicity and singleness of aim necessary in the adequate statement of the truth.

The first books of the Bible were prob-

ably written from the historical standpoint, to record and preserve the knowledge of important events. Then dramatic representations of the truth appear, after which come devotional books of praise and prayer. Next in order are the Wisdom books, containing proverbs, maxims, and wise sayings for practical life, and, finally, the prophets give us earnest appeals in behalf of righteousness and predictions of future events. In none of these writings is there any intimation that future ages were in the thought of the authors, and there is no manifest consciousness that what was written was to go into the formation of a sacred book to become the guide of God's people for all time. There was no statement or intimation that they were written with such an object in view, or that it was at the time the intention of the Divine Spirit that what was written should finally be used for such a purpose, or that it was intended ever to give such a book as the Bible to men. These separate writings each accomplished the purpose for which it was written, living and holding its place in the literature of the world among

many similar productions, till at last the discerning minds among believers came to see the permanent and universal quality in the special message and the evidences of divine inspiration which it contained, and so gave it a place in the collection of books that finally made up the sacred canon. Some of them were several centuries in winning the recognition which gave them their present position. Some of them were very unpopular at the time of their appearance; some were greeted with a divided sentiment and heated controversy. Some of the prophets were accused of disloyalty to their reigning sovereigns and of consorting with the enemies of the state; some were accepted as useful for instruction, but not as authority in matters of religion. Not till contemporaneous asperities had died away, and the essential truth emerged from the local and temporary conditions, were these productions fully appreciated and their high and universal quality recognized.

The literary instinct, as well as the practical needs of a literature, grew as the centuries advanced, and in the later

years of Israel's history many manuscripts appeared. They were historical, poetical, devotional, and dramatic, with the Israelitish people as the center and boundary of thought. This fecundity of thought became embarrassing and naturally forced the question of the relative standing and value of these various productions. From those that were certainly divinely inspired they shaded off by gradations of quality to those that were certainly not divinely inspired, but it was exceedingly difficult to draw the line of just separation. It would not do to take the assumption or claim of the author, for some that were certainly inspired were written by men too modest to make any claim, while then, as in all subsequent history, some were very bold in claiming divine inspiration whose productions belied their claim. It would be unwise in a time of national conflict to ask a verdict concerning the inspiration of a passionately patriotic production that fitted in well with the circumstances and temper of the times, for a dispassionate and reliable judgment under such circumstances would be improbable. Passion,

prejudice, or party feeling must not enter here; the feelings awakened at the appearance of such a production must be allowed to cool and the publication must be tried and proven in the stress of life's great needs by more than one generation before it can be recognized as worthy of a place in the sacred canon. Even then it was never possible to arrive at unanimity of judgment. To this day these differences persist, and the Roman Catholics accept as canonical various books which Protestants denominate apocryphal.

A great number of manuscripts were before the public and were in use in their schools, in public worship, and for instruction in national history. The time came when the most discreet and learned saw that there must be a classification of their literature and a definite setting apart of such books as they considered authoritative and worthy of being accepted as a revelation from God. The writings once issued were no longer in the power of their authors, but were wholly subject to the decision of those to whom they came as to what position they should occupy

for instruction or authority over the minds of men; and even their claim to divine inspiration must be passed upon and approved by men before they could have a place in the sacred canon. If the writers were inspired, they who composed the sacred canon by sifting out Hebrew literature must have had some measure of the same inspiration to enable them to do their work wisely and well, which agrees with our general proposition that inspiration is a permanent gift to the church, expressing itself at different times according to conditions, circumstances, and characters. In exercising this office of classification the Hebrews divided their Scriptures into three departments: I. The Tora. II. The Prophets. III. The writings of the Hagiographa.

I. The Tora was composed of the five books of Moses. In early Israel the regulation of worship, and the disposition of public affairs as well, fell largely to the priests. They made decisions and communicated the divine will by means of the lot, the ephod, and the Urim and Thumim. The sanctuary became the seat of gov-

ernment, where judgments were rendered by those appointed to act for the people. These proceedings were called "inquiring of the Lord," and the decisions rendered were "the statutes of the Lord." In all these proceedings and judgments they naturally went back to the law of Moses and based their decisions on his teachings, which implied that they were accepted as divine authority. Thus, naturally, the books of Moses came to be recognized as the highest authority to which appeal could be made, as the very Word of the Lord to Israel. It is impossible to fix the time when these five books were thrown together as the recognized embodiment of Hebrew law. From the beginning of the organic life of Israel they must have held such a position in the public mind, but in the economy of the Hebrews the more formal declaration and setting apart did not occur till the existence of other writings claiming such recognition made the formal act necessary. Naturally, the rather vague reverence in which the writings were held from the first came to definite form and clearer classification and

interpretation under the attrition of thought and the practical results of centuries of conflict and agitation in developing national life and ecclesiastical polity. As all the great world forces were thrown into this seething vat with these writings, there could come out but one result: the law of Moses proved itself and won its position in the thought of the world as "the law of the Lord," just what it was declared to be from the first.

II. The Prophets. Long after the "Tora," or law, had come to its recognition another class of writings claimed recognition as worthy of a place in the sacred canon the Prophets. In this classification the Hebrews included Joshua, First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, and the writings of the later prophets. Of what we recognize as prophetic writings, Amos was the first in order of time, though spoken prophecy had been a great power in Israel for many centuries before the time of Amos. Whether these prophets wrote their messages to the people, or delivered them in oral form and had them taken down at

the time or afterward by some scribe, we do not know, but it is certain that some parts of them at least were written by divine direction. Isaiah in two places commands that his words be written down for the instruction of future ages. A hundred years after this Jeremiah is particular to have Baruch take down for preservation the words that fell from his lips, that this record might take the place of one that had been burned in the fire by Jehoakim, king of Israel. These prophetical books, in contrast with the books of the law, represent the conscience, the faith, the spiritual life, the worship, and the ethical righteousness of the people of Israel. Here we find the enthusiasm and the heroism of faith, and the passionate love of righteousness that characterized the best life of the Hebrews.

III. The writings of Hagiography. This third division is composed of literature later in origin than the law, and later than much of what is classed by the Hebrews as prophetical. These writings include First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Canticles,

Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations. They contain practical precepts, proverbs, rules for holy living, dramatic treatment of life, facts of history, poetic utterances of joy, love, faith, hope, and the feelings and aspirations of a true religious life. This classification was not made by any one age, but it grew as the literature grew, and, of course, could not be completed till the last book, Malachi, was written.

It is quite possible that some books included at one age were thrown out or lost in another age, as we find in the book of Numbers a book alluded to that is lost to us. Also in Joshua, in the account of the sun standing still, an appeal is made for confirmation to the lost book of Jasher, that then seemed to be an authority. What the selective conscience and judgment of the Hebrew people chose out of their literature as the Word of the Lord to them and to the world the ages have so accepted and held sacred. These three divisions are recognized in the New Testament as they were held by the Jewish people generally.

There was no determining conclave or

conference that decided what books should go into the Old Testament canon. The religious consciousness of the Hebrew people, instructed and guided by the Holy Spirit, after a fair testing of the books in the school of experience, made the decision in a most formal way by accepting and using such as were approved. The religious consciousness of the race has changed about as little as has the consciousness of pleasure and pain, or of food and drink, and its decisions in Hebrew history were practically what they would be now if acting under similar conditions and on the same class of facts. To what extent the counsel of the learned may have influenced the common mind we have no means of knowing, and while we may suppose it to have been considerable, we have no reason to think that it would be out of harmony with that religious consciousness which was practically the same in the learned and the unlearned. Many books were bidding high for recognition, and there had to be careful discrimination and thorough sifting to get at the bottom truth concerning each one. If a book held

its place in the faith of God's people through the varying experiences of one, three, or five hundred years, its standing was fixed. There never was any other authority, human or divine, that decided in a formal way what books should go into the formation of the Old Testament; yet there could be no higher authority than the concurrent testimony of thousands of people of best character who had tested the books in their own experiences. Especially does this appear when we remember that these experiences, as well as the books themselves, were under the control of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER V

THE MAKING OF THE CANON
(CONTINUED)

THE NEW TESTAMENT

A NEW literature sprang into being under the powerful appeal made to the human intellect by the incidents in the life of the Prophet of Nazareth, and much more by the wonderful circumstances of his death and resurrection. No life in history compared with his in thought-producing energy, in soul-arousing power, and the demand for full and formal statement was universal and insistent. Many books were written, some of them prejudiced, one-sided, incomplete, unsatisfactory. The evangelist Luke makes this the reason for venturing into the field of literature. He admits that many other accounts had been written, and seems to imply that they are not satisfactory to his mind, so he writes his own account to the honorable gentleman to whom his production is addressed, that

he "may know the certainty of the things" wherein he had been instructed. Even the Gospels of Mark and Matthew were not entirely satisfactory to Luke, for they left out certain important teachings of the Master that he thought ought to be recorded.

It must be observed that the literary movement was a little slow in starting, the first books of the New Testament not appearing till twenty years after the Lord's ascension. We must also remember that the Christians had a Bible which they highly venerated, and which seemed sufficient for their needs. Saint Paul preached in the synagogues, using the Hebrew Scriptures and making them the source of his material in expounding the kingdom of God as set up by Jesus Christ. In Rome he brought together a great company in his own house, "To whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets." These early Christians were so absorbed and occupied preaching and building the Church of Christ that they had neither

time nor strength for writing. We never should have had Saint Paul's great epistles had not God wisely ordered that he should be held in prison those long years when he seemed to be so much needed in the field, that he might have quiet and time for that greatest service of his life in writing those wonderful productions that for two thousand years have been giving light in all the earth.

The early Christian writings were mostly produced under the spur of some immediate and pressing necessity. They were addressed to a particular locality, to single individuals, or in response to appeals for counsel. There is no indication or intimation that any one of the writers had the faintest idea that his production would finally find a place in the sacred canon and be held in the same reverence as that which had attached to the Hebrew Scriptures. Greatly as they were appreciated by the Christians of the time, they could not be held in full sanctity till touched by age and with the veneration that finally invested the names of those who had seen the Lord, after they had passed into the

fellowship of the church triumphant. There was no intimation while the apostles lived of a purpose to gather together the writings of their age into one volume, to be a part of the sacred canon. That thought was a later development, for while the apostles lived, their public recital of the events worthy of mention in the life of our Lord, and their expositions of his teachings would have precedence over anything they might write, and in the public mind would seem to render unnecessary a written account. Not till their testimony was completed and they were removed would the church awake to the apprehension of the great and enduring value of what they had written.

The simplicity and naturalness of that literature, one of its greatest charms, is evidence that it came from the heart with a single purpose and a single aim, with no apprehension of the position to be assigned to it in the future. Only thus could the human mind be absolutely responsive to the motions of the Holy Spirit, when it was wholly absorbed with the one purpose of conveying the truth to a case of need.

These writers make no demand that their productions shall be placed in the same category with the Hebrew Scriptures, nor, indeed, do they intimate any concern about the future disposition of them. They left their ministry of writing as their ministry of speech to the providence of God, not knowing which should thrive, "the early or the late sown," the written or the spoken word. They wrote under an inspiration to meet a present need, and it remained for the inspiring Spirit at a later period to indicate to Spirit-filled men the real character and enduring worth of these productions. The apostolical church accepted them as authority for instruction in the facts of Christian history and in the doctrines of Christian faith, but they could not class them with the writings of Moses or the prophets till there was a sufficient lapse of time to invest them with the air of sacredness that naturally falls over the things of the past when we are removed at a sufficient distance from them. From considering them as books of instruction in the facts of history, the principles of faith, and the practical duties of religion, it was

easy to rise to the higher conception that they were divinely inspired and that they were to be incorporated with the Hebrew Scriptures as the culmination and completion of their revelation for the permanent instruction of mankind.

The Spirit's office as inspirer and teacher of the church did not cease when the apostolical writings were finished. He was the life of the church from the first, the source of its best thought and noblest achievements, and he forever remains the inspiration of its real life and progress; he is the conservator of its aggressive spiritual power and of its right thinking. The promise was that he should abide "forever" with the church, and without him the church would be a dry, withered, and lifeless thing. We do him no greater dishonor and the church no greater wrong than to teach that the Holy Ghost is active only in great epochs and on special occasions. Inspiration is the abiding privilege, the great need, and the only adequate equipment of the church; the whole church is "the body of Christ," instinct, actuated, and alive by the indwelling Divine Spirit. It may be mani-

fested in different forms and degrees, but he is always present in the church that is faithful to the divine covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. God did not lodge the glory and responsibility of revelation and redemption with any age or nation, but the whole race of every age is held to its part in the great work of inbreathing and communicating life and truth to humanity through Jesus Christ. The apostles wrote, and their writings threw such a glory over their age that we sometimes think inspiration ended with them, but their writings would have been no more than so much wastepaper had not the Divine Spirit moved upon the minds of a later period to discover that they were inspired of God and worthy of a place in the sacred canon.

That there should be delay and differences of opinion in coming to an agreement as to what books should be admitted to a place in the sacred canon was perfectly natural. The feeling of reverence that naturally arises toward a writing that has come down from a preceding generation, the practical experience and observed facts concerning the effects of a teaching, and the

opportunity for gathering up all the facts concerning the production of a document, as well as the opportunity for considering and testing the claims for divine inspiration, were essential in the formation of the canon. If a very popular, influential, or learned minister in any city, or a great bishop or far-wandering missionary should write a treatise, history, or doctrinal epistle, there would be local or party interests that would clamor for giving it a place in the canon, and it would not be wise to pass upon it till a second and more impartial generation had arisen. Saint Paul's writings would be very enthusiastically received in Gentile cities like Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome, but they would meet with great opposition and disfavor in Jerusalem and other Jewish cities. The epistle of Saint James, on the other hand, would be hailed with delight in Jerusalem and among "The twelve tribes scattered abroad," but among the peoples instructed in Saint Paul's great Christology and in his doctrine of justification by faith it would not be acceptable, and among them it would be declared unworthy a place in the sacred canon. The

personal and local feeling in these and other cases must die out before the time is ripe for deciding what writings shall make up the Bible.

This treatment of the case brings into decided prominence the human element in Bible-making. But we are to remember that in not one of these writings is there any intimation that they were written with a view to their having a place in the Bible, or that they would be read by, or have any influence upon, future generations, or that the writers had any anticipation that a Bible would be formed out of the writings of that age. The whole history and method of redemption and revelation may be summed up in the one term, "God-man." If the divine element is transcendent, the human element is essential; to deny either its true place is to devitalize and destroy the truth. To fail to recognize the human is hardly less fatal to the truth than to fail to recognize the divine agency in revelation. The two work as a composite union for a result that could not be reached if either were lacking.

Jesus Christ went away from the infant

church without giving any direction about writing or preparing an addition or supplement to the Hebrew Scriptures, nor did he give any directions about the organization or polity of his church so soon to be formed. Two great institutions were to be raised up for the evangelization of the world: a divine-human book to furnish material for preaching, and a divine-human organization called the church. The inspiration of the Holy Ghost was to be the formative force of both, but that force was to be manifested through the human intelligence, in terms and forms to be apprehended by the human understanding, and in response to human need. Both developed gradually and unconsciously, as the best life always does. The unfolding was slow, and it was not a forecasting of the future, but an effort to meet the need of the present. Men cared very little for written documents or formal institutions, so long as the living witnesses of the glory of the Lord on fire with a holy enthusiasm kindled by personal contact with him were traveling everywhere reciting the thrilling facts of their own observations and experiences

with him. There was little appreciation of or demand for a literature so long as the living preacher who had seen the Lord was available. The church had need of but few institutions or forms so long as its services were conducted in private houses or in the open air, and prior to the rise of a hymnology and liturgy. It was the office of the Holy Spirit to furnish the truth, the organization, and the means for disseminating and preserving it in response to human need and through the organ of the human intelligence.

These two lines of the movement of the Spirit of God developed slowly, but when fairly developed they became the norm and suggestion of truth for all after times. It has been the habit of all theological teachers and ecclesiastical builders to go back to this early age of inspiration for authority in their teaching. But one only needs to study the origin of the diaconate in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, or the subjectivity of the writings of Saint Paul, to see how large the human element is in both lines of the developing kingdom of God. There could

have been in all this process of development no thought of producing and projecting into the future a literature to rule the thought of coming ages, for that early church was thoroughly obsessed with the idea that Christ would return during the lifetime of that generation and take into his own hands the reins of government.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW TESTAMENT BECOMING HOLY SCRIPTURE

The early New Testament was a flame of religious enthusiasm. Four events like the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and Pentecost occurring in a period of fifty days, and the marvelous initial successes of the church, are sufficient explanation and justification of it. That this enthusiasm ran into excesses of fanaticism along some lines was indicated by the disastrous attempt at community of goods, the folly of which soon became apparent. In this great movement that permeated all classes the living preacher who could report upon these great events as an eyewitness or participator in them was the chief agent and the greatest force. The incidents of the Lord's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, with such explanations as might be given, would be repeated over and over to entranced audiences that would never tire of hearing the wonderful

story, and to whom the facts would seem to justify the most extravagant expectations for the future. There was, then, no need for written documents, nor was the temper of mind such as to awaken any desire for them. The oral teacher who could recite and expound the events that had just occurred with thrilling effect was all the church then wanted.

There was no apprehension of need for written documents in the future, for in this great enthusiasm of the new life the church had become thoroughly obsessed with the idea that the Lord would soon return, overthrow his enemies, take possession of the kingdom, and carry his believing children home to heaven. There would, therefore, be no need even for the Hebrew Bible very long, and certainly no need for any addition to it. They had not carefully studied the sayings of the Master about his second coming, and in their eager enthusiasm had jumbled them all together in one mass, as referring to one event. They did not discern that some of his utterances referred to his resurrection, which was a real "coming again" after having gone away, some to

the day of Pentecost, which gave a fulfillment to his saying that, "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power," but they seemed to confound all his sayings on the subject with the last great event, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him," to judge the world. They fully expected him to come during their lifetime and that they would be permitted to share in the glory of his triumph over the world.

With such an expectation of the consummation of all things so soon, there could be no thought of forming a new Bible, or an enlargement of the old by the addition of Christian writings.

This enthusiasm that was burning bright with an aggressive flame was constantly fed with new fuel in the form of wonderful miracles, interpositions, and deliverances hardly less astonishing and assuring than the great redemptive events themselves. The witnesses who were testifying for their Lord, and the apostles who were preaching his gospel, with the great body of believers,

accepted these miraculous incidents as a divine attestation of the correctness of their teachings, and this added inconceivably to their influence with the people. The gift of tongues and other miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit continued in the church for many years, feeding the flame of its enthusiasm. This was true as late as the writing of Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, as anyone may see by reading the fourteenth chapter, a work that was not written till about thirty years after Pentecost. Those years constituted the period of dynamics in the church, when the miraculous powers of the Spirit of God were employed to propel the new church in its victorious march among the nations.

Not until twenty years had passed after the resurrection of the Lord did anyone think it worth while to put anything down in writing. By that time the mind of the church had cooled a little, its thinking had been clarified by experience and broadening knowledge, and the disappointment in the expected immediate reappearance of the Lord aided the coming in of a broader

outlook upon the needs and possibilities of the church. Then as the early witnesses were passing away by death, their number becoming fewer and the number of congregations becoming greater, it became increasingly difficult to secure a living teacher who had personal knowledge of the events of which they wished to hear. Many of the most distinguished ministers had gone into foreign parts on missionary tours, or were locked up in prisons. Then a written communication from these absent leaders of the church, many of whom had endured untold sufferings and hardships that awakened great sympathy for them among the people, would be hailed with great joy, and reading them to the congregations would produce a profound religious sensation. At first there could have been no thought with the writers or with those to whom these productions were sent that they would ever take their place by the side of the Hebrew Scriptures, and be held sacred and authoritative, as they were. But when the living witnesses had all passed away, the written testimonies which they had left took on a new importance,

and then arose the task of discriminating and deciding which were to be regarded as divinely inspired and authoritative. We can no more believe that this selection was left to human caprice and fallible judgment than that the writing itself, or the forming of the infant church polity was the product of the unaided human mind. It was the office and work of the Holy Spirit to instruct and guide the church, and he could best do this by giving it a divinely inspired literature that should feed its intelligence and inspire its faith.

Fortunately, we have more light on the formation of the Christian Bible than we have upon the early stages of the Hebrew Scriptures. The literary impulse had been greatly intensified and developed, with a much broader outlook and keener interest in all world questions. The new faith had its roots in and received contributions from all the great world centers, and it left tracks on the sands everywhere by which its movements can now be traced and verified. The growth of the New Testament is under our eyes, and we can see the process as it slowly develops.

Let us take our stand in one of the Christian congregations of Rome, the first Sabbath after Saint Paul was beheaded there, and watch the feeling of reader and congregation as the Epistle to the Romans is read. There would be an interest, enthusiasm, and recognition of its divine quality such as had never been before, and every one would be ready to acclaim it as the very word of God through the blessed Paul. Or, if we should visit one of the colonies of Jews settled up on the banks of the Nile, where the gospel of Christ had been accepted, and chance to be in one of their congregations just after they had received news of the death of Saint James, bishop of Jerusalem, and they should bring out and read his epistle addressed to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad," we would hear them exclaiming in their spiritual rapture: "It is nothing less than the voice of God! There is nothing in the writings of Moses superior to it." And so if we would follow every book of the New Testament through its early experiences, we should find some clear and decided recognition of its quality that gradually won its way by

inherent merit, till it was crowned and throned as Holy Scripture.

The records are wonderfully satisfying to the most critical mind. The period of the oral gospel was drawing to its close. The story of eyewitnesses had been told in all the great world centers, with about such variations of details as we find in the written Gospels. No doubt the differences between Saint Paul, Saint James, Saint Peter, and Saint John had been noted and discussed, much as they have by Christian scholars of all the ages. Every city would have its favorite apostle, Gospel, or Epistle, and one would say, "I am for Paul, or I am for Cephas, or I for Apollos, or I for Christ." Some of these apostles preached at one place what they had not at another as the result of growing knowledge. As in the case of the eloquent Apollos, he had been preaching with great power in a number of cities, "knowing only the baptism of John," but when more fully instructed he added the great distinctively Christian truths to his preaching, and such changes in the preachers themselves must have produced no little unrest and discussion

among the people. All things were in a state of flux, tending slowly toward a settled and fixed condition when the unchanging written productions of the apostles should be accepted as inspired of God for final authority.

We must not overlook the fact that there were great numbers of what have been called "logia," or written scraps of information about the Christ. They were incomplete, mixed with legends, or trivial and personal matters that would render them unsuitable for public reading or for a place in the Bible. A gentleman in Jerusalem on business could not fail to write home some account of a strange prophet that had visited the city, and he would give a report of his sayings and doings. A gentleman from Alexandria traveling through Palestine would happen at Nain the day the widow's son was raised to life. He would write home an account of this and of other wonderful things he had seen and heard. Some poor man rescued from a life of pain and weakness by the touch of Jesus would spend part of his new strength in writing to his distant mother an account of this.

and of many other blessed things done by the wonderful Prophet of Nazareth. Anyone can see that there must have been a great flood of these "logia" distributed everywhere, but such an admixture of the impossible, the absurd, the legendary, the fanciful, the fanatical, and the deliberately false that they had to be used with great care. Many scholars suppose that they were the storehouse of material on which the writers of the New Testament drew largely for their material. But no man knows anything about that. Some think they can see marks of it in New Testament writings; others think they are imaginary. It certainly would derogate nothing from the inspiration of a production to show that the author derived his information from the oral or written communication of another, for the inspiration of the author would seem to verify the correctness of the information. It is a matter where there is no room and no need for dogmatism; a man may conjecture what he pleases about the sources of information so long as he allows the imprimatur of inspiration. Out of all this melange of literature it was im-

perative that the church for its peace and purity of doctrine and teaching should select what would be an authoritative standard of faith and practice. To this we now come.

Passing by some others, the first witness we care to bring forward is Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia. He was born twenty years before the death of Saint John, lived in Hierapolis, where he met the daughters of Philip the evangelist, who were prophetesses in the days of Saint Paul when he was entertained for a long time at their father's house. He numbered among his friends the great Polycarp, and others who had been associated with the twelve. He was a very earnest student of all the records upon which he could lay his hands that gave any information about the sayings or doings of Jesus Christ. He speaks of two Johns, calling one, evidently the Saint John of the Gospels, "the elder." He says, "John the elder told Papias that Matthew wrote the Logia," that is, the sayings of Jesus in Hebrew. "And this too, the elder said, Mark, the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, yet not

in order, all that he (Peter) told as said or done by Christ. For he (Mark) himself did not hear the Lord nor was a disciple of his, but—of Peter, who used to give teachings to suit the immediate wants, but not as a connected narrative, so that Mark made no mistake. For he took care of one thing, not to leave out anything he heard nor give anything in a wrong way."

The first Gospel written was this by Saint Mark, the material for which was derived from the public addresses of Saint Peter and from private interviews with him. Soon after followed the Gospel by Matthew, then that by Luke, and about twenty-five years after came the Gospel of John. But all these came after the death of Saint Paul, so that in none of his Epistles is there mention of any of these Gospels, or of any other Christian writings recognized as scripture. We are just now at that period when this recognition began slowly to appear. It was not by any miracle, prophet's dictum, or decree of council or conference, but by the constant growing use of these Christian writings in public worship and for private instruction in the

things of God. A book that was found worthy to be read in public service with increasing appreciation grew constantly toward a place in the sacred volume. The Holy Spirit in the church recognized the Holy Spirit in the Word, and that was the determining and guiding force.

The postapostolic age begins about A. D. 100 with a letter written from the Church of Christ in Rome to the church in Corinth, that marks another stage in the rising tide of Christian literature. It is believed by scholars to have been written by Clement of Rome, and while it does not quote formally from the Gospels as recognized scripture, it does use much of the language of the Gospels in references that show he was familiar with them and held them in high regard as sources of Christian truth. Irenæus says of him, "Clement had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, and had the preaching of the blessed apostles still sounding in his ears."

Another most distinguished witness comes onto the stand from the sacred city of Antioch, the most important city in early Christian history after Jerusalem.

Ignatius was the bishop there at the end of the first century. He was put to death for his faith early in the second century, and on his way to martyrdom at Rome he wrote seven letters, to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Romans, the Philadelphians, the Smyrnæans, and to Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. In all these letters he shows great familiarity with our New Testament. He does not refer to its teachings as equal in authority with the Hebrew Scriptures, but treats it with a respect verging toward such a recognition. In the city of Antioch he stood in the very places made sacred by Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and all the great Christian leaders, and was thoroughly familiar with their works and writings. He is therefore an important witness for the existence and growing reverence for the writings of the New Testament as we now have it.

A great character now comes before us to give his testimony in the person of Polycarp. There is no more fragrant name in Christian history, no one more revered for his services while living and for his

steadfast faith when dying as a martyr. The readers of church history will remember his noble answer to the governor when he stood at the stake ready for them to kindle the flames. The governor tried to evade executing him, and he cried at the last: "Swear, and I release you. Revile Christ." Polycarp replied: "Eighty and six years do I serve him, and he has never done me wrong. And how can I blaspheme my King that saved me?" He wrote a letter to the Philippians, the people to whom one of Paul's Epistles was written. That letter is full of the New Testament, used as though he thought it most authoritative and useful to them, at least most persuasive and influential in leading them to that which was for their greatest good. He does not speak of the New Testament as Bible but he uses it with a respect that shows that it had come near to that in his own thought.

Only a few years ago "The Teaching of the Apostles" was discovered and given to the Christian world. It dates from about 120, though parts of it are much older. It corroborates the witnesses already heard

in these pages in support of the position that the New Testament as we now have it was in general use, with a degree of respect and reverence, not equal to but approaching the prevailing feeling toward the Hebrew Scriptures. All through it there is a free use of the Gospels, of all the Epistles of Paul and of other writers. It is, of course, not so circumstantial and satisfactory to us as it would have been if the author had written with an eye to the fact that his work would pass under the critical eye of the twentieth century. He wrote for the good of those whom he was addressing, without technical care, in an easy, flowing style, with great simplicity and sincerity.

We might add much more testimony of the same kind as that already given, from the letter of Barnabas, from Valentinus, Hermas, and many others, but those who desire to follow the subject further will know where to find the literature for it. We now come to a later period and higher development of New Testament influence. Moving forward fifty years, we come to the great Roman churchman, Justin Martyr. We pause with him only long enough to say

that he reports that about forty years after Saint John's death the Gospels are being regularly read along with the Old Testament, sometimes preceding it as of greater importance. This marks a decided advance in the use of the New Testament.

A little later we have a conclusive proof of the prominence the New Testament had secured in the life of the church by the publication of Tation's Diatessaron, or the Book of the Four. This is proof that the four Gospels were in use, and in such general use as to justify the labor and expense of such a publication.

We have a mutilated fragment of a most important old document discovered a few years ago in the Ambrosian Library of Milan. It is called the Muratorian Fragment. It dates from about 170, and contains the oldest known list of the books of the New Testament. It begins with the Gospel of Saint Luke, all above that being torn off; the lost part almost certainly contained the names of Matthew and Mark. Following Saint Luke is the Gospel by John, then the Acts of the Apostles,

after that the thirteen epistles of Saint Paul. The Epistle of Jude, two epistles of John, the Revelation of John, and the Revelation of Peter, are also named. The Epistle of James, First and Second Peter, and the Epistle to the Hebrews were omitted, as these probably were not generally known in the west till a later period.

We now turn to another very important witness in the person of Irenæus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul. He was a native of Asia Minor, and thus became one of the living bonds between the east and the west, having been in Rome, and finally bishop of Lyons. He saw Polycarp in his boyhood and had unusual opportunities for knowing the inner life of the church, its recognized literature, and the respect in which its various writings were held. He speaks of the four Gospels, and says, "The Holy Spirit said by Matthew," showing that the church then held the inspiration of the Gospels. He also mentions as "scripture" the Acts of the Apostles, twelve epistles of Saint Paul (omitting Philemon), the Revelation of Saint John, also First John, First Peter, and Hebrews.

In reciting how he used to see the blessed Polycarp when an old man sit and repeat what he had heard John and other eye-witnesses say about the works and words of the Lord, he uses this significant language, "And all that he said was in strict agreement with the Scriptures." This shows that the New Testament books were then regarded as scripture.

From Irenæus we return east again to hear from Clement of Alexandria, one of the great churchmen of that age. In speaking of one of the sayings of Jesus, he says, "We have not this saying in the four Gospels which have been handed down to us; it is to be found in the Gospel to the Egyptians." He quotes from the Acts of the Apostles, twelve epistles of Saint Paul (omitting Philemon), the Epistle to the Hebrews (which he says is by Saint Paul), First John, First Peter, Jude, and the Revelation of Saint John. He shows that the line of separation was not yet sharply drawn, as do some of these other witnesses I have quoted, by referring to other writings as inspired that were later rejected, as the epistles of Clement and Barnabas,

the Revelation of Peter and the Shepherd.

From Alexandria we pass west on the continent of Africa to historic old Carthage to hear from one of the greatest minds of that age, Tertullian. He was a sturdy, stirring man of wonderful power and influence. He complains of a clumsy translation of the New Testament into Latin, now in use in his churches, that he does not like. This Latin Testament, as his quotations show, contained all the books of our present New Testament except the Epistle of James, Second Peter, and Hebrews.

This brief outline of the testimony of the postapostolic church brings us down to the year 200. We have not found, nor can there be found, any decree or formal action setting apart a certain number of books to be accepted as inspired and authoritative in the church. But we have found a growing use in the churches, and an increasing reverence for certain books held to be inspired of God, with slight variations in the books included in the lists in various cities. In a few of the

churches some of the books now in the canon were not received, such as the Epistles of James, Second Peter, Second and Third John, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation. In some of the churches certain books now considered apocryphal were accepted, as the epistles of Clement, Barnabas, Hermas, and the Revelation of Peter and the Shepherd. It is slow yet substantial progress for one hundred and forty years of Christian development.

We now pass over a hundred years and come to the period of persecution under the Emperor Diocletian. The lives of Christians were sacrificed, their Scriptures burned, and their assemblies broken up. The eagerness of the persecutors to destroy the Scriptures is one of the best evidences of the esteem in which they were held by the church. The great church historian, Eusebius, who had seen the Scriptures burned in the market place by the persecutors, is our first witness. In 331 Constantine, the Christian emperor, is on the throne, and he sends to Eusebius in Jerusalem an order for "Fifty copies of the Divine Scriptures on prepared skins, by skilled

scribes." In fulfilling this order for "the Divine Scriptures" Eusebius divided the writings which were claimed to be scripture into three classes, as follows:

I. The accepted books, which include the New Testament as we have it with the exception of these seven books, the Epistles of James, Jude, Hebrews, Second Peter, Second and Third John, and Revelation.

II. The controverted books, that is, books received in some places and not in others. This list is composed of the seven books omitted in the first list.

III. The spurious books, in which he names the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas.

This testimony substantiates two points: that the term "Divine Scriptures" was used by Constantine and accepted by Eusebius as applying to the New Testament, and that the books of the New Testament in the opinion of Eusebius were substantially as we have them. It was the opinion of Tischendorf and many scholars agree with him that the manuscript which he discovered in the Convent of Saint Catharine on Mount Sinai, and the manuscript

in the Vatican Library in Rome, were of this number of fifty prepared by Eusebius.

Thirty years after this the great Athanasius in Alexandria, who has the credit of having saved the church from heresy, prepares his annual letter to the clergy to be read by them in the churches. In that letter he gives a list of the accepted books of the Bible, and after completing the Old Testament he comes to the New Testament, and gives as his list exactly the books which we now have in the New Testament.

We now go back to the church at Rome for our last word of testimony on this subject. In the year 383, at the request of Pope Damascus, the great scholar Jerome began the revision of the old Latin Testament. This was the beginning of his great work, the Vulgate Bible, which for one thousand years was the Bible of all Europe. In this revision the books he gives are exactly the books we have now in the New Testament.

This practically completes the discussion of this subject in the present treatment of it. Much fuller and very convincing evi-

dence might have been given if we had not feared overtaxing of the reader's patience. It will be observed that there is here no mention about a determination of the books that should belong to the New Testament by any council, conference, or other ecclesiastical assembly of the church. This is for the simple and sufficient reason that there never was any such action. The common spiritual consciousness of the church settled that question through three hundred years of development, and from that decision there is no appeal. In the sense in which the word used to be employed, there is not, and there never was, a canon of the New Testament. We use the word only in an accommodated sense.

CHAPTER VII

THE APOCRYPHA

THERE can be no fair and thorough discussion of the making of the Bible that does not take account of the Apocrypha, which has been held, and is still held by many, as a true and legitimate part of Holy Scripture. The Bible is not the clear-cut product of a recognized authority, the exact boundaries of which may be determined with mathematical accuracy; but it is, rather, a clear stream flowing through muddy waters, the margins of which are bordered with a mixed condition that shade off into that with which it has nothing in common. The literary impulse that grew stronger as the life of the race deepened and broadened, under the stimulating influence of the great truths of revelation, was very active in the stirring period between Malachi and the coming of our Lord. Some of the productions of that period seem quite up to the plane of inspiration in moral and spiritual elevation, while others are trivial and worthless. In

drawing the line between inspired and uninspired, both in the Old and in the New Testament, some books were very near the line on both sides, some barely winning, and others as narrowly failing of recognition.

The books of the Apocrypha have held a semisacred position through all history. They have been held by many as equal in inspiration and authority to the other books of the Old Testament, but a still larger number have refused to concede this much to them, while holding them of great value for instruction in the history of Israel and for edification. They are permeated with the devotional spirit that characterizes all Hebrew literature, they maintain the high ethical standard set up in the Old Testament, and have the same insistence upon supreme loyalty to Jehovah. They seem to be the product of spiritually minded rather than of Spirit-guided men; at least this was the judgment of those who determined the Hebrew canon.

In order to accuracy and clearness of thought it is well here to state that the literature of that period between Malachi and Christ was divided into two parts:

first, the books that we include in the Apocrypha; and, second, the books known as apocalyptic. The first were historical and practical, the second prophetical in form without prophetic inspiration, and more given to the portrayal of disasters than to the unfolding of the glories of the coming kingdom of God. Saint Jude recognizes the truthfulness of one passage at least in the book of Enoch, which is one of the apocalyptic books, but no strong claim has ever been made for the recognition of these books as inspired.

The books of the Apocrypha, which approach so near to inspiration as to have a kind of halo about them in our minds, are, First and Second Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the Remainder of Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Song of the Three Children, Story of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, and First and Second Maccabees. The first point to fix in our minds concerning these books is that they never were admitted into the Hebrew Bible; that volume closed with Malachi.

But to understand that period and the

religious influence acquired by these books we must look beyond the established Hebrew communion. There was at that time a large, thrifty, enterprising Hebrew population in all the trading centers of the world. Two influences were responsible for this: first, the captives carried away to Babylon and into Persia never all returned to Palestine. Many of them grew strong and influential in the lands to which they were carried, and found it to their interests and agreeable to their tastes to remain; second, the opportunities of traffic and business in such enterprising cities as Antioch, Corinth, and Alexandria drew many of the most enterprising Hebrews away from their native land for the better conditions offered. In all these commercial centers the Greek language was in general use, and where the Greek language went, Greek arts, ideas, and methods of life naturally followed. The Hebrew element in these communities was touched and modified by these influences. Saul of Tarsus was brought up in such a community, and, strict Jew as he was, his whole life shows the influence of this en-

vironment upon the intellectual development of his young life. Naturally, the old Hebrew exclusiveness and strictness would give way to more liberal thoughts and feelings, and there grew up a broader-minded, a more open-minded generation of Jews than had ever before appeared. While this may seem to have been a loss in one way, it was a great gain in another way, for this element in the life of the nations was a people prepared and made ready for the approach of Christianity. It was among these people that Christianity had its first great triumphs. It came to them on the plane of the Hebrew Scriptures to which they were still devoted, but it made certain additions to them, a method for which their liberal tendencies had prepared them. If we follow Saint Paul in his missionary tours, we find him everywhere going into the synagogue of the Jews, opening the Hebrew Bible and arguing from it that "this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ."

This vast Græco-Hebrew population had its most learned and influential center at Alexandria in Egypt. To that entire population the Apocrypha appealed more power-

fully than to the more strict Hebrews. It fell in with their liberal tendencies to give it larger consideration than was customary among the regular Jews, and from this center in Alexandria especially went forth influences that affected its relation to the Bible for all time. The king of Egypt, Ptolemy Philadelphus, who took a great interest in the Jews and in their literature, conceived the happy thought of giving them their Bible in the Greek language, the language with which they were most familiar. So, about B. C. 250, he secured the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek language by Seventy, or, to speak more accurately, seventy-two of the best scholars of the age, from which numerical fact it derived the name by which it has generally been known, the Septuagint. Hardly any other literary event has played so large a part in the growing thought of the world as this translation has, not only in Egypt and Palestine, but throughout the world. To gratify these Jews of "the dispersion," who naturally came to have laxer views about inspiration than was common among strict Hebrews,

the Apocrypha was bound up with the other books of the Bible. The books of the Apocrypha came in by degrees in successive additions without formal action or declaration, and so came into common use as a kind of subordinate scripture without any clearly defined or well understood standing or authority. Thus they became linked to the Septuagint version in a relation that has proven wonderfully persistent and embarrassing. So at that early date there were practically two Bibles, the Hebrew canon and the Septuagint version with its apocryphal addenda.

A very important question now arises: What was the attitude of the early Christian Church toward these two versions? One of the first things that strike us is that our Lord and the apostles made nearly all their quotations from the Septuagint version. This we must believe was not because of a preference for that version, or for its relation to the Apocrypha, but because it was the only Bible three was in the language of the people. The people did not understand the Hebrew language; they used the Greek, hence the

Greek Bible was used in conveying to them a message from the Scriptures. The question as to which was the true Bible, the Palestinian or the Alexandrian, cannot have been considered a very important one, for there is no allusion to it in all the apostolical writings.

The testimony of the early fathers of the Christian Church with practical unanimity supports the Hebrew canon as the true Bible, but without rejecting the Apocrypha in every case, as worthy of a place with the other sacred writings. There is often a vagueness of statement, an apparent effort to gloss over a difficulty that leaves us in doubt of the author's real position. Melito, bishop of Sardis (150-170), gives a list of the books of the Bible containing only the twenty-two of the Hebrew canon, but he gives the titles and the order of the LXX, leaving us in doubt whether he may not have combined two or more books under one title. The learned Origen (185-254), in dealing with this question has a similar vagueness and want of definite statement that leaves us in doubt as to his exact meaning. Irenæus,

bishop of Lyons in Gaul; Clement of Alexandria, the city where the Apocrypha had its recognition; and Tertullian, of North Africa, all commanding personalities in the early church, quote from the Apocrypha and have it bound up with their Bibles. The "Old Latin" version of North Africa was made directly from the Alexandrian Bible of the LXX and contained the Apocrypha.

Coming down to the great church historian Eusebius, a leading authority on questions of the canon, we find in his writings three separate lists of the books in the canon of the Scriptures, and in every case he omits the Apocrypha. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, a little later is very decided against the use of the Apocrypha as scripture. Among other things he says: "Learn from the church what are the books of the Old and New Testament, and I pray you read nothing of the apocryphal books. For the translation of the Divine Scriptures which were spoken by the Holy Spirit was accomplished through the Holy Spirit. Read the twenty-two books which these rendered, but have nothing to do with apocryphal writings." Equally explicit is

the testimony of the great Christian leader of the fourth century, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria. He says, "All the books of the Old Testament are in number 22." Then he proceeds to give the names of the books, just as we have them to-day. The synod of Laodicea (360) gives the same list in enumerating the books of the Bible. Some other authorities of that period were more favorable to the use of the Apocrypha as scripture.

We now turn to the Church of Rome, which represents nearly one half of the nominal Christianity of the world. We here find the vagueness and indefiniteness that had so long prevailed coming to a definite and clear statement in the decree of the Council of Trent, adopted on April 8, 1546. The Vulgate Bible prepared by and under the direction of that great scholar of the fourth century Jerome, for a thousand years the Bible of Europe, at first excluded all but two books of the Apocrypha, but gradually they crept in till at the time of the meeting of the Council of Trent they were all bound up with the canonical books. Martin Luther strongly denounced the use of the Apocrypha, in-

sisting that only the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament and the acknowledged books of the New Testament should be admitted as of authority. This was as a red flag to the Council, which was burning with fury against everything Lutheran. Though opposed by all the best scholars and ablest thinkers of the church, the proposed action was rushed through the Council, in which occurs the following: "The holy Ecumenical and General Council of Trent, following the example of the orthodox fathers, venerates all the books of the Old and New Testaments, with an equal feeling of devotion and reverence." Then follows a list of the books, including all of the Apocrypha, with an anathema on all who in the future shall not receive all the books as equally inspired scripture. Bishop Westcott says: "This fatal decree, in which the Council, harassed by the fear of lay critics and grammarians, gave a new aspect to the whole question of the canon, was ratified by fifty-three prelates, amongst whom there was not one German, not one scholar distinguished for historical learning, not one who was fitted by special study

of the subject in which the truth could only be determined by the voice of antiquity." A General Council of the Roman Church having made such a declaration, there is no way of recalling or going round it, but it must stand for all time as the position of that church.

The attitude of the Greek Church has been wavering, inconstant, if not self-contradictory. The synods of Constantinople, Jaffa, and Jerusalem seem to approve the Apocrypha, while many of the leading scholars refuse to accept it, and the Longer Catechism of Philaret, which has official sanction, gives to all books outside of the twenty-two an inferior place, as meant for the reading of those just entering the church. The theory of the church seems to be expressed in this rule of the catechism, but its practice has been about as free and varied as though there had been no rule on the subject.

The position of the Anglican Church has not been decidedly for or against the use of the Apocrypha, though it has consistently held that full inspiration belongs only to the canonical books. The Apocrypha is

sanctioned for ecclesiastical use, but it is not accepted as authority for doctrinal purposes. On certain days portions of it are read in the church lessons, but for edification rather than for establishing doctrine. In all her versions of the Scriptures, from Tyndale to the Authorized Version, the Apocrypha is printed by itself as an appendix to the Old Testament.

All the Protestant churches stand on the ground held by the best scholars of all the ages of Christian history, that the books of the Apocrypha hold a subordinate position to the books of the sacred canon, are no part of it, and are to be read for edification and instruction and not for doctrine.

Thus we find the Christian world divided into two camps, one opposed to the other on this question of what constitutes the Bible. Thus we are brought back to our fundamental position that inspiration is a perpetual thing in the Church of God, and that men do not come to the knowledge of God and of his will concerning them but by the Light of the Holy Spirit, whether they have or have not the Bible. The process of spiritual discrimination, applica-

tion, and appropriation is still going on, and men must for themselves decide this fundamental question of the ages by choosing between the one canon and the other. Happily, the question is reduced to a form where great practical error is not possible, and the great message of God to men remains intact in either choice. The addition of the Apocrypha to the Bible brings in no new truth, nor does it take away any old truth. God's real Word remains unaffected by it. If with our Protestant Bible we should bind up Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Speech, Epictetus on How a Man on Every Occasion Can Maintain His Proper Character, and Demosthenes's Oration on the Crown, we would take nothing from and add nothing to God's great revelation to men. Some would find in these productions a real inspiration, as truly divine to them as anything in Esther or in the Song of Solomon, and in no way conflict with anything in the sacred canon. Practically, the exclusion or the inclusion of the Apocrypha is of little importance, for the great message of God to man is unaffected by it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRESENT STANDING OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is now everywhere accepted by Christian believers as a revelation from God, teaching the truths of religion and the duties of life as no other book does. But it has not been so accepted because of the claims of the authors, nor yet because of the faith of the people to whom the various books were written, but because a living spiritual energy has gone forth from it, producing fruits that reveal the character of the tree. The ages have been full of pretended revelations, sanctioned by assumed miracles and visits of angels. Even in this most enlightened period of the world's history impostors boldly strut before the public, claiming to be sent of God to teach mankind the way of life. One of the latest of these has stolen and misappropriated to itself two of the most influential words in our modern life, for Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific; that is, it does not make Jesus Christ supreme as the Saviour of

men, nor does it proceed according to the facts of human experience as testified to in all the course of history. Striking cases of the kind that have had large success through longer periods are Mohammedanism and Mormonism, but other equally fraudulent but less successful claims have been innumerable. A skillful artist can deceive "the very elect" in pretended miracles. The magicians of Egypt were able to match the miracles wrought by Moses up to a certain point.

The acceptance of a revelation by an individual to whom it is made may be sufficiently warranted by attending circumstances, but to prepare a book for general acceptance through long periods of time requires corroborating evidences that appeal to the cool judgment of mankind with convincing force. The Christian Scriptures were subjected to the learned criticism of the best scholars of the age when they were written. They were put on trial and tested in the practical experiences of life by thousands of people in all positions of life. All the thinkers, scholars, and preachers of the faith were

set to work comparing them with the accepted standards of religious belief and with their own religious consciousness, and no production found its way into the canon that had not successfully passed all of these tests of its genuineness and truth. In all these processes we assume what was promised by our Lord, that the Holy Ghost directed the course of thought in the church and led to such conclusions as were according to truth.

The Bible is cordially accepted by the believers of this age as the Word of God, but it is conceded that the human element in it is large. It appears in the style of writing, in the expression of taste, temper, passion, national bias, and other peculiarities of the writers. Saint Paul looks at Christianity from the standpoint of the law, as a system of righteousness and salvation above law and yet not without law; Saint Peter views Christianity from the standpoint of fulfilled prophecy; and Saint James looks at it as a perfected system of ethics and practical precepts. The human element is everywhere in evidence, its weakness as well as its strength.

The Word that was made flesh also presents this double aspect, "very God" and "very man." The human element was so pronounced that many could see only that, while his closest friends of most spiritual type fully recognized it and thought it no derogation from his deity that he ate fish and bread like other hungry men. His favorite title for designating himself was "Son of man." As with the Word made flesh, so with the Word made literature, the human element, with common human limitations, is the visible, the outstanding feature that adapts it to human intelligence and makes the strongest appeal to the human heart, yet is it the Word of God. It has many limitations that speak for themselves.

Among these is incompleteness. It is in fragments, as though men became weary, or knew but a part, or had not time and other resources for writing fully. No writer completes his task. Saint Matthew omits very important utterances of the Lord reported by Saint Luke, and both fail to give some of the best things spoken by the Master, as reported by Saint John,

and he declares in the closing verses of his Gospel that if he should record all the works and words of the Lord, "even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

It was limited also by man's knowledge and capacity for understanding. This accounts for differing styles of writing, sweep of thought, depth of reasoning, and height of poetical genius in the different books of divine revelation. The revelation must be according to the capacity for understanding and expression of the person receiving it. The ablest teacher could not give instruction in algebra to one who did not know the alphabet. The messages of God to men had to be adapted to their intelligence, the range of their vocabulary, their experience and capacity for spiritual understanding. Therefore the Master said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." They must learn more, experience more, and rise to a higher plane of life before they could be fitted to receive the revelation he had to make.

A good illustration of this principle is in the use of the word "holy," or "holiness."

It was a thousand years before Israel came to understand that word, and only then by a careful education by sprinklings, washings, and ceremonials emphasizing the idea of cleanness and purity. There was absolutely no conception or knowledge of such a character as that word was intended to represent outside of Hebrew literature; there were no examples, no standards, and no etymology to guide the understanding. The early Hebrew idea of the word seems to have been that of unapproachableness. The same appears in the kindred word of "righteousness" as used in Hebrew literature. The high ethical meaning of that word did not appear till the later prophets of Israel turned their searchlights upon it. Revelation must, therefore, be given with reference to man's vocabulary and range of spiritual understanding, unless it is intended, as in the case of the words just cited, to follow the revelation with a long process of education to make its meaning clear.

It was limited also by its mechanical equipment. It was given before the age of printing and paper-making, and after the revelation was made its existence was very

precarious and its preservation in accurate form very doubtful. It was written for the most part on papyrus, a frail and unreliable substance made of layers of the pith out of the stock of a growing plant, pressed together, polished, and cut into sheets from six to eighteen inches wide and of any length required. Parchment was too costly for as poor a people as most of the early Christians were. If the sheets of papyrus became damp, they contracted mildew and the writing became illegible; and if they were thoroughly dry, they became brittle and were easily broken and crumbled. It is easy to see that being often unrolled, loaned from one individual to another, and carried from one church to another to be read in the services and examined by many curious people or admirers of the author, there would be great danger of deterioration and loss. We have but to think out the circumstances attending any one of these manuscripts to see the danger to which they were exposed. Take the case of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. If it was carried to Rome by Phœbe, as it probably was, her arrival in

Rome with such a document would be one of the most sensational events of the age. The next Sabbath there would not be standing room in the church where the epistle would be read, and many eager eyes must be permitted to look upon it. Every congregation and group of worshipers must have it, or some part of it read, and that oftentimes. Then there would be requests to loan it to nearby cities to be read in many assemblies. A frail fabric handled thus, often by unskilled hands, must soon suffer in the process. One striking illustration of this liability to breakage and the loss of fragments appears in the Gospel of Mark. Scholars are quite agreed that such a break occurred at the eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter. Anyone reading that chapter will note the sudden stoppage of the continuous account of the resurrection, and the place of the fragment broken away is filled in by disconnected passages from some other source, possibly from memory on the same subject.

The copying of these manuscripts was very unreliable. Anyone who has ever carried a manuscript through our more

improved methods to publication knows how difficult it is to avoid mistakes. After the greatest care by typesetter, proof reader, and author going over it again and again, most unaccountable errors creep in. A man employed to copy one of these Gospel manuscripts would do his work alone, in a hot climate, and it would hardly be possible for him to execute his task without omitting or inserting, or substituting a wrong word. Few people can copy even a list of names of any considerable length without making mistakes.

Another limitation is in the break of continuity. Not one of the original manuscripts of that early apostolic age has come down to us. We have only copies and translations. But there is a great mass of evidence to show that if they are not technically exact copies they are vitally and practically the same as the originals.

Some minds are disturbed by discovering little inaccuracies and errors in our received versions in matters that do not affect the vital theme or essential contents of the revelation. Some minds are naturally technical and given to quibbling, while others

hold unwarranted theories of divine inspiration that are disturbed by discovering these errors. It would be foreign to the purpose of this writing to give a list of these errors; they are so many and so palpable that no careful reader can pass over them without observing them. The various translations differ widely in verbiage, and they cannot all be the exact words in which the revelation was given at the first. And if we admit any departures from the exact original, we have no means of determining how far they may have gone. But these lingual errors do not affect the great substance of the message; the way of salvation and the will of God concerning human conduct shine out clearly through all the encumbering limitations of the human element of style and stumbling utterance. If our Revised Version is without error as the very Word of God in phraseology as well as in substance, then our fathers had a Bible in which were many errors, as anyone may see by comparing the fifth of First John and the third of Saint James, as well as other scriptures in the Authorized and Revised Versions.

This condition of the revelation harmonizes with what was said earlier in this discussion to the effect that nothing could be more fatal to human development, spiritual as well as intellectual, than an exact methodical revelation, in which every word was just as God uttered it and in which every duty of life was clearly stated, so that a man would never have anything more to do than to pull out his schedule to determine just what he ought to do. This would paralyze the intellect and dwarf the soul by removing the necessity for effort. The mind needs the spur of reasonable doubt, and the necessity for laborious and prolonged investigation for disentangling complex and obscure conditions. For man's good the truth must be placed where sincerity of purpose, honesty of method, earnestness of effort, and prayer for divine help are necessary to attain it. This becomes an educating, developing process that may be of more value to the soul than the truth itself. He is not a wise father who hands out to his children as their needs require without exacting productive and creative energy and skill on

their part, for he thus holds them forever in an infantile state. The mother eagle chooses between nurslings and eagles, and because she prefers eagles she flings her young out of the nest and compels them to beat the air wildly to save their lives till they learn to mount and soar skyward.

God has placed all his gifts along the pathway of heroic effort. Man must learn by strenuous toil how to build a handful of dust into growing and ripening grain, how to transform that into a baked loaf, and how with that to build living tissues and brain cells out of which, by heroic effort, he can project his Iliad, his Divina Commedia, or his Paradise Lost. He thanks God for the gift of gold, but he does not find gold dollars rolling down his streets, but he must penetrate the frozen Klondike, search long and climb till he grows dizzy to find above the timber line, carefully disguised and locked up in the flinty quartz, God's great gift to man, which he must dig, explode, crush, and mint before he can use. God's best gifts are in some such form. The great vital thing in truth-getting is the hunger

of soul that longs for it, the heroic effort that moves toward it, the kindling vision that discloses it, and the lifting up of the soul to God that finds him and in him finds the truth and so is satisfied. If God were to give us a revelation that would save us this effort and its resulting discipline and development, it would be a positive injury to men. Jacob wrestling in doubt and fear all night at the brook Jabbok was a far better method for his highest good than it would have been to send a convoy of angels the day before to assure him of safety. There is no better method of proving and developing sincerity, honesty, and devotion in men, and of driving them to God in prayer for the promised teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, than the necessity of grappling with all these questions raised by modern criticism, for which the way seems to have been left open. In this search for the truth the souls of men must be held in a prayerful mood and in vital relation to the Divine Spirit whose office is to guide us "into all truth," the truth that "shall make us free indeed."

CHAPTER IX

THE BIBLE THE CREATURE OF EXPERIENCE

The divine method of revelation was to lift one man into a new atmosphere, permeate and enswathe him with truth and spiritual influence, and to quicken his soul till he had the power of vision and a kindled enthusiasm for declaring the truth as he saw it. Truth was not dropped into the mind as an abstract proposition, but it came in by the way of experience as a concrete fact, demonstrated as to its reality by experience. A man must first become the truth, see and feel the truth; then may he prophesy, and not till then. It means something more than intellectual cognition, something deeper, more satisfying, and more assuring. The word of the Lord must always come out of "the burning bush," the supernatural equipment, illumination, and empowering of a man given over to the service of God. Especially must this be so for the written reve-

lation, intended for the instruction of all ages, that there may be no error, no lack, and no extravagance. It is the office of the Divine Spirit to charge the human mind with his thoughts and affections, and to assist it in their adequate expression.

This element of experience in divine things as the necessary channel of divine revelation is clearly manifested in the first writer of our sacred books. When the time came for beginning the formal development of God's purposes to Israel, a special person was selected as instrument, teacher, and leader. The childhood of Moses was sufficiently marked by special providences and striking events to raise among his people the highest expectations for his after life. He must have known these facts and been stimulated by them in his education in the universities of Egypt.

When at the age of forty he came to a consciousness of his divine vocation as deliverer and leader of Israel, a little precipitation and lack of prudence threw him back on a long course of discipline that would have crushed a less resolute man.

With the charge of murder and treason hanging over him, he must hide himself in the far-away solitudes of Midian. A university man of splendid abilities, tending sheep in mountain wilds for forty years, would be a humiliation and dwarfing experience that would have broken or shriveled up a nature of less inherent greatness. His life seemed a failure, his career ended, his conscious vocation a delusion when, at the age of eighty, came the stirring call to heroic action, a call so illumined and vitalized by attending divine manifestations that it could not be set aside. Then followed the ten plagues, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night on the outward march, the dividing sea and the falling manna, Sinai and its revelations, angel leadership and the vision of God's glory. Then out of all this investiture of divine manifestation and wonderful experiences came the voice of a man, a man charged and packed full of these great events which were translated into thought and speech in him. They became his very life, and he spoke what he was, what he saw and felt under their molding influence.

All that he wrote was but the record of his experience, and of all that came to him and out of him through these experiences. He was that "burning bush" held aloft in all his leadership of the people, giving forth light and speech from the flame that did not consume but glorified that upon which it fed.

If we come to the patriarch of Uz, the central figure in that drama of truth that has instructed and comforted so many, we find experience the substance, the ruling idea of the book, turned over and worked out in all the details of a wonderful teaching drama. A man stricken with loss of children, property, health, and sorely perplexed in mind about these experiences and their cause is visited by his friends, who assume to be his comforters. They attempt to apply to him the untrue but prevalent theory of the times that physical well-being was proof of divine favor and the loss of it evidence of divine anger because of some sin. They pressed him to make confession, to declare his sin and thus seek the favor of God, that he might be restored to prosperity. Daily disputing

with these misguided friends, worn out by loss, suffering, and broken health, Job is down where the flame of life barely flickers in its socket. When there are no deeper depths of distress to which he may descend, Job is commanded to "pray for his friends," who had vexed and tormented him by false insinuations in the time of his great suffering. Rising to the moral height of this requirement, forgetting his own griefs, in a vicarious supplication like that on Calvary, he stretched out his hands of skin and bone toward heaven, and while he poured out his soul to God in prayer for his misguided friends, thus reaching perfection's height, the light fell over him and the account is, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." It is a drama of wonderful experiences, luminous with truth and instructive to all ages by his experiences and through them. It is the experience that infolds and gives out the light that is in the book, and from the first it speaks of and to experience.

If we move forward along the track of history to the great source of the psalmody and spiritual literature of the Hebrews, we

find everywhere the "living waters" flowing from the smitten rock of experience. The poet king who gave the Hebrew people their first great spiritual inspiration and uplift was thoroughly disciplined and developed in the school of experience, and his highest poetical flights were the declaration of his own states of mind or experience. His boyhood training as a shepherd developed in him what became the ruling idea of his life, the duty and necessity of caring for others; and in a country where there were no universities it was one of the best possible trainings for kingship.

While yet a lad he heard the living God and the armies of Israel defied by the braggart Philistine giant and felt his nature stirred to its profoundest depths and his faith put to its utmost test. Then first there came into his nature a thrilling consciousness of power, as it has come to many another lad on occasion, and he felt that all Israel was in some way represented in him and that he stood in defense of the glory and honor of Jehovah. In that consciousness the hero emerges and the shepherd boy drops out of sight. After that he

came into the experience of a great love and a bitter hate. Jonathan loved him, as hardly any other man has loved another, and Saul hated him with a wild, cruel, irrational hate that would be appeased by nothing less than the death of its object. But standing there over the sleeping form of his enemy, with his drawn sword in his hand, he cut away only the skirt of the king's robe which he afterward displayed as proof of a magnanimity like that of the prayer of Calvary by the Master for his crucifiers. Afterward, with a sad break in his own moral integrity, followed by bitter penitence and spiritual restoration, he learned in himself the frailty of human nature.

To these educating and developing experiences that fitted him so admirably for speaking out the truth most needful to men was to be added in his old age the heartbreaking anguish of rebellion in his own family. He was driven out of Jerusalem and across the Kidron, derided by some of his own subjects, and found retreat in the wilderness across the Jordan. The ambitious Absalom pursued him with an

army, and when the battle was joined, the king sat in the gate waiting for tidings. When one came saying, "All the king's enemies be as that young man Absalom is," then the king turned away and went up to his chamber lamenting as he went, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

All these thrilling experiences were breathed forth by this tuneful and poetic nature in the psalms that have been the voice of the Lord to the souls of men through all these centuries because they fit human experiences so perfectly, so evidently the word of God to some soul in its deepest experiences reproduced and expressed for the instruction and comfort of all souls. The things that he had experienced developed, clarified, and spiritualized his thought, and became the repertory on which to draw, under divine guidance, for the instruction of others. We read what he says with our eyes on his experiences, and interpret the one by the other.

It is equally true of the great "evan-

gelical prophet of Israel" that he came to his visions of the truth by the way of experience. Isaiah says, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up." In that vision there came to him an overwhelming sense of his sinfulness, and he poured out confessions and self-reproaches till an angel came with a coal of fire from the altar and laid it upon his lips and declared that his iniquity was purged away. Then, with a new light and a new life, he began those wonderful utterances, made possible by fire-tipped and fire-purified lips, that have been for the comfort and instruction of the church to this day. The experience antedated and was the channel of the revelations, of the high sense of righteousness, of the fine ethical sense, and of the vision of the coming Christ that appear on all his pages. The light of that first vision illuminated the whole universe of truth and flung its light far out along the pathway on which men are traveling. But for that experience the voice of Isaiah would probably not have been heard beyond his own age, and his message will

hardly be understood but by the way of a similar experience. Truth lies in strata, moves in levels, and to understand it one must rise to it, strike its vein, and follow its bent.

The prophet Ezekiel was not less dependent upon the vehicle of experience in the revelations that came to him and through him to the world than were the other Old Testament writers. His first educating experience was the deep pain and humiliation of a captive in a strange land. This no doubt drove him to earnest prayerfulness and searching inquiry into the ways of the Lord with his people. Then rose before him that wonderful spectacle of the four living creatures—the wheels and wheels within wheels, full of eyes, the infolding fire, and the moving power that proceeded in straight lines. This burning fire, the seeing eyes, rolling wheels, and straight movements come to expression and exposition in the subsequent words of the prophet. This experience, and all else follows naturally.

If we come to the New Testament, we find there also experience going before

teaching and furnishing the material for it. The apostle Paul had one great experience that changed, illuminated, and empowered his whole life and gave character and substance to all his thinking. He rose into a new realm of truth by experience, and he lived, worked, wrote, and fought on the facts of that experience. For forty years of wonderful ministry that was his constant appeal; whether before the mob in Jerusalem or before King Agrippa, everywhere and always he recounted that experience as his defense and as the explanation of his life. The Christology of Saint Paul, the most pronounced and glowing doctrinal feature of the New Testament, was developed out of that experience. We read those wonderful passages in Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians, in which the Lordship and redeeming glory of Jesus Christ are stated with such ability and beauty of phrase, looking all the time at that Damascus experience as the germinal source of it all. Out of this Christology of Saint Paul rose his doctrine of sin and grace, and out of that his doctrine of law and faith. Not only do his doctrines come out of that

experience, but the moral and spiritual forces of his life have the same origin. With such a vision of the power and glory of Jesus Christ as came to him, there never could be lack of courage, faith, abounding cheerfulness, or overflowing love. That experience contained the germ of all doctrine, personal devotion, ministerial fidelity, missionary impulse, and hopeful outlook to the future. How could he fear shipwreck, prisons, scourgings, persecutions, or any possible ills after such an experience? And was it not perfectly logical for him to send down the ages the ringing challenge, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice"?

Saint Peter's writing and preaching, so far as reported, is a reproduction of what he saw, heard, and experienced. When insisting that the faith he held was not "cunningly devised fables," he supports the assertion by declaring that he and his fellow disciples "were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." This is the substance of all apostolical teaching—the report and exposition of the various experiences through which they passed in association with Christ or in the prosecution of his work after his ascension. The Acts of the Apostles is but a record of miracles, of the works connected with them, and of the truths illustrated and confirmed by them. Instead of the Acts of the Apostles, it would be nearer the actual facts to call it "The Dynamics of the Holy Spirit." It is a book of experiences with their doctrinal implications.

This is a close adherence to the strict scientific method: first the fact, then the theory or doctrine derived from it. But always the fact is the basal, the determining thing, and the doctrine the necessary logical conclusion from the fact. In connection with the experience revelations were made that reached out into the future or into realms of truth beyond the range of experience, but in natural line with it, deducible from it, and confirmed by it.

As revelation came to us by the way of

experience, and moves on that plane, so is it understood only in the light of experience. We must rise to its level if we would catch its spirit and deepest meaning. One must have musical taste and culture to appreciate the best music; only artistic taste—that is, a mind conscious of the beauties of art—can appreciate a masterpiece; literary taste and culture are necessary for the understanding and appreciation of the best literature; so is a spiritual nature, developed by spiritual experiences, necessary to the understanding of revelation. This manifest fact in our intellectual life is clearly stated by Saint Paul when he says: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore to receive the revelation properly requires the same spiritual elevation that is necessary in making it, which brings us again to the proposition stated before in this discussion, that inspiration by the Holy Ghost is the perpetual need and privilege of believers, as it is the promised office and work of the

Divine Spirit. As in wireless telegraphy the receiving station must be constructed and equipped as the transmitting station is, so they that receive must be in the same spiritual condition as they who transmit the revelation.

CHAPTER X

THE BIBLE TESTED BY EXPERIENCE

This is a fair test, just to the book, reliable and scientific in character, and satisfying to the thinking mind. If it was sent forth by God, the embodiment of infinite wisdom, adapted to the human race by the maker of it, and designed for a certain purpose by Him who rules all things, then we have a right to expect two things of it: first, that there will be in it a working energy that will persist and hold to its purpose till its work is done; and, second, that it will be found to fit into existing conditions and to work toward a general betterment.

If it came forth from God and has in it the life and thought of God, its system of truth should be reasonably satisfying to the most learned minds, its standard of ethics should be the best known, its curative and corrective methods for human frailties and weaknesses should be the most effective,

its motives to worthy conduct the most moving, its rewards to virtue the most engaging, its supports under trial the greatest, its outlook for hope the brightest, its grounds for confidence the strongest, its aids to love the most creative and helpful, its regenerating power by the Holy Spirit the most effective, and in all ways it should prove itself an adequate corrective of human perversity and an abundant supply for human need. If God sent it into the world, putting his personality into it and back of it, so that he could say of his Word, "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it," then we shall be justified in looking for results corresponding to this high ideal. Does it accomplish what it proposes? Is it effective in the thing it undertakes? Does it live up to contract? These questions naturally suggest themselves, we have a right to ask them, and the author of the revelation invites us to consider them.

This is the scientific method, settling questions by facts. The final, the unan-

swerable appeal is to facts; they must stand; they will stand, inveigh against them as we may. When the question of propelling cars by steam was under discussion it was said in the British Parliament that it would be impossible, for a speed of twenty miles an hour would take away one's breath. But this seemingly conclusive argument lost all its force when the great trains between London and Edinburgh began running more than forty miles an hour. Men sneered at the proposition of an Atlantic cable, but when Queen Victoria and the President of the United States exchanged congratulations under the ocean the argument was closed. Facts crash through theories, overturn and remake them. Facts of experience are the final, the unanswerable arguments, and by them the Bible must stand or fall. Life is more than logic, experience more than philosophy, and fact more than theory.

The Bible came into the world to teach, regenerate by the Holy Spirit, and develop human beings. It was thrown into a swirling mass of contending forces to master, guide, and unify them for the uplifting

of men. In this work it encountered great opposition from the very first. Its message was uncompromising, insistent upon new and unwelcome ideals, condemnatory of much that was highly prized, and hostile to the prevailing order of things. If not revolutionary, it was so radical and uncompromising in its teaching that it tended toward a world-wide overturning and readjustment. The ambitions, passions, and lusts of men everywhere combined against it; rulers were afraid of it, and the common people hated it because it interfered with their pleasures. The burning of the roll of Jeremiah's message by the king of Judah was but a type of that spirit of opposition that has antagonized every stage of the unfolding revelation.

This, then, is its first practical test, the opposition of its enemies. This proved its quality, its power of endurance and of recuperation, and the reality of a divine superintendence over its course. It is the kind of proof the battleship is subject to when the forts pour their rain of shells upon it; if it comes unharmed out of that trial, we need no other proof of its quality.

The Bible has survived the opposition of many of the keenest intellects and best scholars of the various ages of its history. Evil-minded men have employed all the resources of their great learning and ingenuity to discredit its claims and to dispute its authority. The first appearance of the sacred books, the Word in literature, was greeted with as much skepticism and opposition as were manifested against the "Word made flesh," and they were supported by much more learning and intellectual ability than were employed in the effort to discredit Jesus Christ. No keener intellect ever entered the field of controversy than was employed by Celsus in the second century in his efforts to discredit the Scriptures, and many of his colaborers in this undertaking were men of great ability and varied learning. Hardly anything new has been said against the Scriptures since that first and fierce assault. Many of the propositions of "modern doubt," "advanced thought," "new theology," or "latest scientific thought" are simply unexploded shells picked up from that old battlefield. That early period, on

to the fifth century, remains unsurpassed for the brilliant scholarship and the keen intellects employed both in the attack and in the defense of the Holy Scriptures. The Bible came forth from this trial by fire of the intellect clearer and stronger in its grip upon the minds of men than it had ever been before.

Then followed the trial by rude force. If men could not overcome the Bible by reason, they could at least strike it down with the bludgeon of rude force. The whole force of the Roman army, then supreme throughout the world, was employed to put the Bible out of existence. During the period of the great ten persecutions (64-303) three objects were constantly aimed at – the suppression of public worship, the destruction of the individual believer, and the wiping out of the Holy Scriptures. Diligent search was made for copies of the hated book, a world-wide campaign was set on foot for its utter extirpation, and no means of torture were left untried to force confession of where it was being concealed. Many brave men laid down their lives rather than surrender

the Holy Scriptures to the destroyers, others resorted to various devices to conceal and preserve the book of their faith. The great church historian Eusebius says of this period of persecution, "I saw with my own eyes the houses of prayer thrown down and razed to their foundations and the inspired and Sacred Scriptures consigned to the fire in the open market place." But He who had declared that "the word of God liveth and abideth forever" kept "watch and ward over his own," and in proof of its divine origin and protection the Bible came forth from this fierce storm of wrath to regain all it had lost and to spread to the uttermost parts of the earth.

We now pass over a long period of time in which were various forms of opposition to the Bible to mention the most formal and formidable attack of atheism. A short method in logic would be to prove that there was no personal God, then, of course, there could be no divine revelation. This form of opposition rose to its highest development among the French Encyclopædists during the eighteenth century.

Among the great scholars and writers who united in this movement were Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, and others who brought great literary skill to the support of their undertaking. The Bible was ridiculed, sneered at, buffeted, and sent to the cross, only to come forth again in a glorious resurrection as the kindling rays of the English Reformation lighted up the dawn of a new day, giving further proof of the divine life that forever abides in it.

Another form of attack upon the Word of God was in the negations and destructive criticism of the English deists, who flourished about the time of the French Encyclopædists, and whom they rivaled in learning and intellectual ability. Among these may be named such brilliant writers as Gibbon, Bolingbrook, Hume, and others who have brought honor to English letters and glory to the Word of God by leaving it unharmed after their able attacks upon it. About this time, and apparently as the divine answer to these attacks, a young Oxford student reading his Greek Testament received such an impulse and uplift from it that he went out and shook the

nations with the power of his word, till men everywhere were roused to a new faith in the Bible and to a new application of its teachings to the regulation of their conduct. All forms of attack upon the book have recoiled upon their authors, leaving it stronger in its hold upon the human mind than before. All this looks very much as though it was given by One who knew perfectly its power of endurance and recuperation and the spiritual forces that were to come into it and attend it, as well as the limitations of all forms of attack that could possibly be made, and who foresaw that it was to go on increasing in power and influence till the whole world was filled with its light and truth. After all the attacks upon it this old book is the youngest and freshest thing of our literature if we are to judge by that fairly good rule, "the best seller." In all the markets of the world men are asking for what has proved itself to be "the bread of life" with increasing eagerness.

In this test of experience we must also consider the verdict of those who having accepted the Bible in good faith as the

Word of God have been proving it in the experiences of life. It is a fair question to ask whether it has proven itself workable, adequate, reliable, and suitable to human needs. The proof of a medicine is in the cures it effects, of a machine in the work it does, and of a religion in the character it creates and maintains. This book, when its teachings are accepted and embodied in experience, shows the thief made honest, the drunkard made sober, the licentious made clean, savage tribes raised to civilized nations, civilized nations becoming missionary, and all virtues stimulated and strengthened. This is proof that it fits human conditions, that it was given by One who perfectly understood these conditions and how to deal with them, and who was good enough to provide the best things for men. If for a machine that runs badly or tends toward self-destruction when driven to action, an adjustment is provided that corrects its fault, it will be acknowledged to be the work of the maker of the machine, or of some one equal to him in understanding. This is the conclusion we arrive at concerning the

Bible: that because it has proven adequate for all man's needs, in every land and age, and in every grade of culture and wealth, therefore it must have been given by his Maker who perfectly understood the possibilities of his life. The Magdalenes followed it, and it led them to pure and beautiful womanhood. The prodigals followed it, and it turned their steps to their Father's house, to the fatted calf and the new robe. The poor man accepted it, and he became conscious of his worth and dignity as the child of a King with a great inheritance waiting for him. The venerable pilgrim, nearing the end of his journey, walked in its light and saw, to his great joy, that he was just at the beginning of an endless life. It came to the man vexed with doubt and fear and gave him peace, to the sorrowing and gave comfort, to the dying and took from death its sting, and over the whole of life it spread the protecting canopy of God's everlasting mercy.

The Bible proves itself by enduring the test of growing knowledge and culture. At the end of three thousand years of marvelous development we still find the Bible

leading the van as the most trusted teacher and guide of the race. It has not yet been superseded, nor has its light grown dim amid the splendors of the day in which we live. This could not have been the case had it been the product of the human mind only. It is proof of divine origin, that coming into the world in a dark age and among a people not remarkable for intellectual culture, its teachings still transcend all that the brightest intellects have been able to produce in a long period of wonderful growth in knowledge.

In the portrayal of the divine character it takes a position so far above and apart from all other human literature as to preclude the idea of invention. The Greek Zeus, the Roman Jupiter, or all the gods of the nations with the best qualities in each combined into one conception of Deity fall so far below the Hebrew Jehovah or the Christian Jesus Christ as to force the conviction that the Bible conception was a gift of inspiration. In all the advanced culture of which our age may justly boast not one line has been added to or taken from that conception, nor has anything

larger or better or equally good entered into the thought of men. Far above all our thinking rises strong, clear, pure, and unapproachable the biblical ideal of the Divine Being, as a vision that came down from heaven and broods over the earth as a lifegiving and sanctifying revelation.

Not only in the ideal of divinity, but also in the ideal morality for men the biblical conception rises far above every other. The best modern thinking, unless formed after its models, does not approach it in excellence of quality. In the field of ethics Plato, with whom Socrates and Aristotle practically agree, named four elements as comprehending his thought on the subject. They were: (1) Wisdom, (2) Courage, or fortitude, (3) Temperance, or orderliness, (4) Justice, or uprightness. There was no recognition of benevolence or of good will toward men in that early philosophy, nor did it occur to them to arrive at good morals by the way of a clean heart or a right spirit. The inward state, the source of all character, did not come within the scope of their thinking. The ethics of the Bible so far surpass all man's thinking,

both ancient and modern, that it is evident man did not formulate its teaching.

The Bible has been tested in the spiritual realm with similar results. The keenest intellects have found nothing to be added and nothing to be taken from the fundamental, all-inclusive law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." The very announcement of it staggers the brain and dazzles the eyes; it is too high for human thought to climb to it; the mind of man never could have produced it without so marring it in the process as to render it other than what it is. Let a man sit down and try to think of something higher than this, to write out something that will equal or surpass it, and he will feel the truth of what we are saying about it. So far as we can see, it is not possible for any intelligence to conceive or express anything higher or better than that law.

In its practical teaching the same superiority to all human systems for regulating and ordering human conduct appears. In

all the ways of testing to which the Bible has been subjected in human experience it proves itself more than human, that it is manifestly of divine origin.

CHAPTER XI

THE BIBLE AMENABLE TO CRITICISM

Criticism is the natural impulse, right, and duty of the intelligent mind, and no considerations of prudence, authority, or mock reverence can work the forfeiture of that right. No one can look upon the Parthenon or the temple of Theseus in Athens without at once raising the questions, "When was this building erected, by whom, and for what purpose?" The answer that his questions would evoke would at once be subjected to the keenest scrutiny of his best intelligence, unless he was ready to admit that his open-eyed wonder was too primitive and dull to generate thinking energy. Anything that claims antiquity or special authorship starts and justifies the question of the correctness of the claim, and must furnish proofs. A document that claims a certain date and authorship thereby eliminates every other, and so opens the door and invites to dis-

cussion. There is no question whether a man ought to use his intelligence in criticizing, since he is so made that he must do it, or decapitate his own intelligence.

All thoughtful readers of the Bible may be classed as higher critics, for higher criticism is simply the consideration of these questions of date and authorship. The readers who find no occasion to depart from the traditional view are as truly higher critics as those who reject that view. Higher criticism is not a certain result, but a process that may and does lead to very different, and sometimes to directly opposite, results. In some cases the best scholarship finds for the traditional view; in other cases the findings are against that view; and this illustrates the peculiar difficulties of the field in which these discussions lie.

We cannot seriously consider the books of the Bible at all till we have come to some conclusions about these fundamental questions of their origin and authority. The five books of Moses give no hint of who was their author or when they were written, therefore the door is left open for

these questions to march in, and they will come in with or without our choice. The book of Joshua and the book of Judges name no one as author, nor do they claim any date as the time of their appearing—these are open questions. First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles, Ruth, Job, and many other books lay no claims to any particular authorship or time of production. If there are any unwritten traditions about these things, we naturally wish to know what they are and on what grounds they make their appeal to our confidence. The degree of interest we feel in the contents of these books will measure the degree of the interest we feel in these questions.

This impulse of the mind toward criticism is not specially manifested toward the books of the Bible or the institutions of religion, though because of their importance it may attract more attention here than in other fields of its operation. It applies to all the products of human energy and skill, to secular as well as to sacred literature, to art, to music, to architecture,

to war—in fact, it is as wide as the creative activities of the race. Those who imagine that it is something invented and employed especially to discredit religion and its institutions have a very insufficient view of the facts. The real critic, like the real scientist, is concerned only to know the facts without regard to what theories they will support or discredit. Whether it concerns the authorship of Homer's Iliad, the Odyssey, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the sacred books of India, or of the writings of Shakespeare, the object is everywhere the same and the methods largely the same.

The history of biblical criticism is a little vague in detail, but it has been sufficiently pronounced in all the ages to enable us to trace it in its various movements. Moses apprehended the presence and work of critics when to Jehovah, who had commissioned him to lead Israel out of Egypt, he made a plea for instruction as to how he should answer these questions that he well knew they would and must ask: "Who sent you? What is his name? What is your authority?" All the ages

since similar questions have greeted every religious teacher, document, and institution, and a satisfactory accounting is demanded. This restless age has been asking them with renewed energy, not from a captious spirit, but to gain full and satisfying information. When men ask for bread of instruction they will not be put off with a stone of dogmatism or assumed ecclesiastical authority. The last centuries of Hebrew history and every age of Christian history have furnished a certain amount of critical output, but the nineteenth century has witnessed a revival of interest, thoroughness, scientific method, and careful collection and consideration of facts that make it seem like a new science. It has indeed taken on a new intensity of life, breadth of purpose, and fullness of equipment.

Modern scholarship is very exacting in demanding adequate credentials on which to rest its faith. If a document, sacred or secular, claims a certain authorship; if institutions, religious or civil, claim antiquity of origin, modern scholarship will carefully examine the facts, test the witnesses as to their competency, sincerity, and disinter-

estedness, and will come to its conclusions only after patient and careful consideration of all the facts. Light and frivolous minds with poor equipment rush to conclusions and proclaim from the housetops immature deductions that have never been tested and proven by the deeper religious consciousness of the great body of believers. The best scholarship is reverent and hesitant to move into new fields and will advance only as compelled by the facts. Only the half-instructed or the overtrained specialist is willing to rush before the public with propositions that have not passed the solemn test of the Christian consciousness of the age. The best minds are cautious and considerate of the dangers involved in disturbing common beliefs in the field of religion, and they proceed with great care and deference to established beliefs.

Yet modern scholarship must be first and always loyal to fact, and it must be perfectly free in that loyalty, or its investigations will have no value. Whether the facts are for or against our cherished beliefs, they must stand, and the loyal investigator must stand with them and for

them. An investigation undertaken with the result at which it must arrive determined beforehand is worthless, for the conclusion was reached before the evidence was heard. Hostility to a document or institution can easily find arguments against it; the moral magnet has great power to sway the needle of the mind. An investigation undertaken with a mental bias is pretty sure to find for the bias. If one starts out with a fixed disbelief in the supernatural, if he rules that out as unscientific and unthinkable, he is utterly disqualified as a critic of the Holy Scriptures, for he has already decided the fundamental point on which the whole discussion turns. He must exclude miracles, predictive prophecy, virgin birth, resurrection, inspiration, and everything essential to the life and being of Christianity. We do not say that he must believe these things, but that he must admit and feel that they are possible, else his conclusion is reached before he begins his investigation, and therefore it is worthless. This narrows the field of competent critics, but it is necessary for the integrity of the in-

tellectual process. The specialist, doctrinnaire, or special pleader cannot be admitted here. The mind must be open as the day for the light to stream in from the east, from the zenith, or from the west.

CHAPTER XII

THE LIMITATIONS OF CRITICISM

It is important to bear in mind that while criticism is a legitimate exercise of the intelligence to which the natural forces of the mind impel us, it is surrounded with certain limitations that bound the field of its action and affect the value of its deductions. It is not an exact science, and its achievements must be sifted and carefully weighed to ascertain their true value.

Much of the literary criticism of the Old Testament is vague, indeterminate, and unsatisfying. The canons of literary criticism are sufficiently accurate and reliable in themselves, for they are the product of careful, scholarly thinking. But their application to an individual case, as to the Bible, is subject to the infelicities of a possible faulty diagnosis. The remedy is good where the conditions for which it is appropriate exist; where such conditions do not exist it may prove deadly poison. When one comes to sit in judgment he may be influenced by

prepossessions, prejudice, partial knowledge, eagerness for some worthy intellectual achievement, or want of a broad outlook, and so produce work that will be of little value.

The critical theory about the names of Deity in use in the Pentateuch by which the books, chapters, and even verses are split up and divided among a number of supposed authors has been rather roughly handled in the court of reason and has not stood the test of the best modern thinking. The finest classical writers in Greek and Roman literature use a great variety of names and qualifying terms in speaking of their deities, of Zeus, Jupiter, Venus, and others, yet no one ever thought of splitting up their literature into shreds and parceling it out among a great number of authors according to their mythological terminology. In the New Testament and early Christian writings, for variety of expression, literary enrichment, to express particular shades of thought, the writers used a great variety of names, qualifying terms, and combinations of words to express their thought of Deity, as "Jehovah," "God,"

"Lord," "God and Father," "Lord God Almighty," and many other terms. In speaking of Christ the same freedom and variety in the use of terms appears. He is called "Jesus," "Jesus Christ," "The Lord Jesus Christ," "Son of God," "Son of man," "Son of the Father," "Lamb of God," "Alpha and Omega," "The Bright and Morning Star"; and a great number of other titles indicate the variety of thought with which the sacred writers expressed themselves concerning the Divine Being. It would be just as scientific and reasonable to divide up the writings of Saint Paul or Saint John among a number of supposed unknown authors as to take such liberties with the Pentateuch as some critics have.

It is pedantic and wholly without sufficient reason to attach so much importance to the use of particular names of the Divine Being in early Hebrew literature, especially as we know so little about the meaning, derivation, and use of the names employed. The name El is the most primitive and the most widely distributed of all the names of Deity and it appears

in many combinations, as well as singly, in all the Hebrew writings. It was used in Babylonian, Aramæan, Phœnician, Hebrew, and Arabic; it belongs to primitive Semitic speech before it became modified into dialects, but of its origin, derivation, and meaning nothing is known. Following this apparently in the order of time and of development was the name "Elohim." It is also a general name among the nations for Deity, applied in Hebrew literature to the true God, but without any definite meaning that is known to us. Then came the name "Jehovah," which also seems to have been a very ancient name for Deity, to which special meaning and preference were given in the interview with Moses at the burning bush. We do not know its derivation or meaning, nor do we know its true pronunciation, for the vowel pointings that determine the pronunciation were not employed till the sixteenth century of our era. Knowing so little about these names, as we do, all of which seem to have been used promiscuously among the nations, it seems an absurd and unscholarly thing to attempt to break up the Penta-

teuch into fragments and trace them to their original sources by the particular name of Deity which they use.

Neither is there any warrant in reason or in the known habits of writers for the arbitrary breaking up of a single book into a number of parts and distributing them among different authors on the ground of apparent differences in style. It is not according to the known facts of literary composition that an author always maintains the same, or even a similar style. In all literatures the best writers are like the birds in their flight, sometimes high and sometimes low, sometimes slow and sometimes swift, sometimes straightforward and sometimes circular in their movements, sometimes long upon the same course and again often doubling upon their track, but always the same bird. A writer of real ability will use different styles according to the subject he is treating, whether it be grave or gay, scientific or historical, philosophical or poetical, devotional or doctrinal. The style must be suited to the subject and may be largely affected by the mood the author is in at the time of writ-

ing. An author may write at one time in a style very different from what he has used at another time when there is no apparent reason for it. A writer may hold a production long under consideration and after years of thought introduce new matter in a style quite unlike some other parts of the same writing. Goethe was forty years finishing Faust, and a recent German scholar says he can analyze that great production and distribute its parts among different authors on the ground of difference in style after the manner of the higher critics. Every competent thinker who is acquainted with the details of literary composition must see the fatal narrowness, insufficiency, and unreliability of much of this literary criticism of the Bible.

Even the uneducated must see that the presumptuous critic is outclassed, left behind, and hopelessly befogged by his own incompetency for his task when he comes to taking such liberties with the greatest literature. A writer may be moved by a great sense of moral responsibility, he may be fully persuaded that God is putting thoughts into his mind to be expressed by

him, he may fall into a judicial mood for historic accuracy and fairness; again his mind may burn and flash with poetic fires, then fountains of emotion may fling their spray into the air, or deep resentment and fierce passion may break forth in lightning flashes and thunder peals that will shake the earth, or he may breathe out a spirit of love that would cement into one great brotherhood all the families of the earth. The critic approaches a piece of work like this, the output of a great mind led through a variety of moods and experiences in the course of its preparation. He sits down to his work cool and impassive as becomes a critic. He finds a strange medley before him, thoughts and forms of expression that do not harmonize, that jar one upon the other, that are clearly the product of different mental states, and as he concludes, therefore, of different minds. Things are viewed from different standpoints, with feelings, moods, and tempers very unlike, therefore he concludes there must have been different persons engaged in the composition. He takes up his thin blade of literary criticism—it is sometimes very thin

—and he easily inserts it between the various parts, and lo! the structure falls at once into as many parts as the operator listeth.

This kind of literary criticism is not limited to the Bible. The great poem of the incomparable Greek bard, the father of poetry, blind Homer, has been the prey of these rash critics that are now trying to tear the Bible into fragments. The immortal Iliad has been broken into a hundred fragments and the pieces handed around to different authors in all the cities of Greece who are supposed to have furnished them to some master mind who welded them into one great masterpiece of poetic beauty. For two thousand years the critics have been fighting again the old Homeric battles, flinging their clouds of dust and smoke into the air till one can only guess where the real facts are, with this difference, however, that there is a copious shedding of cold ink instead of hot blood. The world still holds to its faith in the unity of the authorship of the Iliad in the brain of the grand old bard whose name it bears.

We are all familiar with the efforts of the literary critics to deny the great master of English literature, William Shakespeare, the authorship of the works attributed to him. The ease with which a skillful critic can use any literature, as the critics have used biblical literature, is illustrated in this attempt to show that Lord Bacon was the real author of the works of William Shakespeare. The plausible nature of the argument in this case should be a sufficient indication of the danger of error in attempting to decide such grave matters by such an insufficient method. A strong argument has been made to show that Thomas Paine, and not Thomas Jefferson, was the real author of the declaration of American independence. And now Professor Mueller, of Germany, in a recent book declares that he can do with Goethe's Faust just what the Old Testament critics have been attempting with its writings. There is no literature that may not be treated in the same way, and this fact is sufficient to discredit and eliminate the method as a conclusive authority. It may be highly suggestive and stimulating to

thought, but as a guide and teacher it is untrustworthy. The method is inadequate to the task it undertakes, and therefore its issue is unreliable. Insufficiency of method is, therefore, a serious limitation on the literary criticism of the Bible.

A second limitation on criticism in general is that its results are inconclusive. This is for the sufficient reason that we are never sure that the facts are all in, and the facts that seem well assured to-day may be overturned to-morrow by some new discovery. The spade is in the ground and the mind waits on the spade; facts spring out of the earth, as plants do, and bear fruit for the feeding of the nations. The field of discovery has only been touched by the enterprise of modern scholars, and vast treasures lie buried in the ruins of ancient cities to be brought forth at some future time for our instruction. Anyone who has wandered over the sands of Gizeh and Sakkara, along the Nile, or over the earth-covered ruins in Palestine, will be convinced that we are not yet ready for a final judgment on many of these questions of criticism. Sir

William M. Ramsay recently said: "Tell them to have no fears for the future of the Bible. The spade is at work, and as it digs, it reveals, more and more, records that confirm the biblical narratives."

The critics of to-day are laughing at those of ten years ago, and those of the next generation will probably look back with much sympathy for their poor, deluded brethren of the present. Within the memory of this generation learned men were teaching that Moses could not have written the books ascribed to him, for the sufficient reason that the art of writing was then unknown. The argument seemed conclusive till the tablets of Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt were discovered; then there was much hurrying to and fro among the learned faculties to get into line with established facts and to save as much of the old baggage as possible. Poor Belshazzar was beaten and cuffed by these merciless critics till it was a real comfort to believe that, after all, he never had any real existence; but suddenly he rises out of obscurity, marches into the field and deals these critics a blow that satisfies all his

claims against them. As for the mythical Sargon, nothing but laughter and ridicule was a sufficient expression of learned abhorrence of such ignorance and credulity as dared to name him—just who is laughing now everybody knows. And these doughty old Hittites, so hard to subdue while living, but relegated to the realms of myth by the critics, have come marching back onto the field with flying banners and have put to flight the last man that dared to question the records concerning them. In so many things the conclusions of the higher critics have been proven worthless that the wisest of them are becoming quite modest in their assumptions, and one must look to the half-educated and the immature for dogmatism on the subject. This is saying nothing against the validity or value of the study or of the method, but it does suggest a necessary limit that commends the wisdom of holding conclusions in a tentative way. To-morrow's shovelful of earth or pickax stroke may shatter the conclusions held for a thousand years.

Another limitation is upon the use to be made of the results of criticism. A due

sense of the uncertainty of the conclusions arrived at ought to make one modest about proclaiming them, and the possible injury to others who cannot accept these conclusions without injury to their faith should lead to great caution in announcing them. Poisons may be so administered by a wise physician as to be curative, but he is liable to arrest as a murderer who distributes them indiscriminately without proper label. The supreme end in teaching is health of soul, spiritual growth and development, and everything must be subordinated to that end. In the great school of learned Hebrew critics that flourished from the eighth century before Christ, this duty of reticence about the results of their study before the common people was a cardinal principle, according to Professor Duff's recent history of Old Testament criticism.

It is of the nature of malfeasance in office for one to accept the teaching function in pulpit, press, or school and use the position to teach doctrines contrary to those of the church employing him. It is fallacious to plead the rights of scholarship and free speech. These rights were in full

force and recognition when the engagement was entered into and when the agreement was made to serve the church and teach its doctrines; that agreement voluntarily limits and sets bounds to these rights. To depart from such an engagement and continue receiving the salary paid for maintaining it is ethically unthinkable in a man laying claim to intellectual and moral integrity. It is sophistical, if not worse, to plead the rights of free speech in defense of unfaithfulness to the function or engagement of a teacher. To make such use of one's knowledge as to confuse, disturb, or injure the ignorant or the young and immature is such an abuse of the sacred office of teacher as to justify summary expulsion from it. One of the first considerations with a sincere teacher in pulpit, press, or school must always be how to impart knowledge so that it will be correctly understood, and so that it will minister to growth of faith and strength of character.

The Pauline principle is the only sane and safe one for teachers, and it does not require divine inspiration or apostolic moral

elevation to see its justness. In writing to the Corinthians the great apostle said: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able to bear it." This is the true principle of adaptation of teaching to the mental and moral condition of those to be taught, involving the holding back on the part of the teacher of much that he knew but which those under his instruction were not yet prepared to receive. A teacher of mathematics who should attempt to teach the Calculus to children in the grammar school would be thought to be mentally unbalanced, or so deficient in ideas of method as to unfit him for his work. It is hardly possible to conceive of a more reprehensible character than that of a religious teacher who vaunts himself, and feeds his vanity with the applause he receives from the ignorant masses for great learning, while destroying the very principle of faith by injecting doubts about things that had been accepted as matters of divine revelation.

Insistence upon this caution in teaching as a necessary limitation upon the student

of criticism does not place any restraint on the prosecution of such studies, but, rather, upon their abuse. In the pulpits, press, and schools of the church immense damage has been done by the reckless and indiscriminate use made of the tentative results of critical studies, and none see more clearly the unwisdom of such a course than the great masters of these studies.

If limited to their proper field, these studies do not touch the vital and essential contents of a book; they deal only with the question of authorship, date, and circumstances of origin. If men have changed or shifted the names and dates in God's book, that cannot change its eternal truth; its spiritual light will shine on just the same, for the foundation of God's truth stands forever sure. Inspiration is a living, perpetual thing, and the most criticism can do is to shift the scenes of the great drama that is forever bringing light and truth to the minds of men. It remains true now as when first spoken, "My sheep know my voice." The devout soul quickly detects the notes of divine inspiration by a spiritual sense that distinguishes the

quality of the tones that fall upon the ear.

Critical studies are often objected to because of their supposed findings, but a more valid objection is their comparative inutility and the habit of doubting and questioning which they cultivate. The habit of rationalizing on all things is unfavorable to, if not positively disabling for constructive or creative effort. It proposes the study of what has been done, rather than creative or constructive doing; and it is even concerned more with the machinery of what has been done than with the substance of the doing. It is objectionable as a mental attitude and form of effort.

In the development of normal intellectual life there are three distinct stages or forms of activity. First, the ideal, in which the mind is reaching after truth, convictions, principles, and visions for its own interior well-being and to fit it for worthy action. Second, the productive stage, when the mind pours forth speech, song, artistic creations, poetry, philosophy, patriotism, religion, or any form of self-expression to which taste or talent may

lead. Then follows the administrative form of effort, when the mind seeks to organize and operate the truths and principles accepted; governments are formed, policies adopted, agencies and instruments employed, and great causes are pushed forward with a strong hand. Thus far the action of the mind has been normal and healthy, working toward the achievement of worthy ends. But another form of intellectual activity may arise, not in logical sequence or further development, but as an unproductive return upon these processes of development for the critical study of the exterior formal facts concerning them. The constructive and productive gives place to the critical, and no one can doubt the effects of that change of mental attitude. This form of activity is logically subsequent to the others and structurally incompatible with them. I do not say it is hostile to them, but by the limitations of the human mind, its inability to carry on many lines of effort at the same time, the one naturally excludes the other. As matter of fact, few minds are broad enough to be productive and critical at the same

time. The dramatic critic is never the great actor. The military critic is never the winner of battles. The art critic is never the master painter or sculptor. The literary critic is never the poet or literary artist. The biblical critic is seldom the great preacher or evangelist. The productive and the critical attitude are so different that both do not exist in the same mind without mutual loss and disablement unless you have a mind of unusual endowments. This question of mental attitude is fundamental in this, as in other realms of thought and action. What will you do? Will you carry the building up story by story, filling the rooms with things useful and ornamental till it stands a completed palace of utility and beauty? Or will you occupy yourself in digging down to inspect the foundations, inquiring who the first architect and builder were, and whether there may not be some confusion about their names and the date of their beginnings? You may do one or the other; you will not do both.

This is the limitation of critical studies which I am pointing out, a limitation on

intellectual productivity and efficiency; not upon intellectual ability, but upon that employment of it that renders greatest credit to the student and largest benefits to others. It is practically impossible for the mind to be intent upon productive work for the moral and spiritual regeneration of men, or for the administrative advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the earth, and at the same time do thorough and reliable work in criticism; the two mental states do not exist at the same time in the ordinary human mind. One may keep himself thoroughly informed about the progress of critical thought without taking the critical attitude or becoming dogmatic about it.

If one looks at the world from the humanitarian standpoint only, how little time or disposition will he find left for critical studies! How can he sit down to study an old foundation with a hungry child tugging at his sleeve, asking for something to eat? With the world's vast, blistering, killing curse of intemperance spreading ever wider its "valley of dry bones," with its illiteracy forever jabbering

in his ears, with childhood and womanhood, wronged and corrupted in all the earth, still lifting up their wail, and with the poor old world reeling on like a drunken man it knows not whither, how can any normal man devote himself to critical studies or feel an absorbing interest in them, unless he is set apart to such scholastic pursuits? The man who in a railway wreck would turn aside to study the mechanical structure of the steam engine, a very useful study, while wounded men and women were calling for help, would be considered a monster of callous feeling, deficient in all the nobler and better qualities of human nature. The work of saving and reconstructing humanity has not yet advanced far enough to justify calling off any considerable contingent of our forces to study critically the men and measures employed at its inception. The humanitarian appeal continues to be bewildering in its vastness and force, and there is only one thinkable response for men of the better nature to make, and that is in the direction of immediate and continuous relief. Think of Martin Luther, John Wes-

ley, John Howard, Lord Shaftesbury, or Florence Nightingale turning a deaf ear to the cry of the world to devote themselves to critical studies! That would have been another fall of angels almost as mysterious and disconcerting as the first, though it is granted that they did do some creditable critical work. It is one of the criticisms made upon the highly educated and intellectual Germans, that they neglected the vital and saving elements of Bible-teaching, and employed their great abilities in critical studies instead of pressing home upon the people those spiritual truths of the Word of God that would have made them the most spiritual as well as the best educated people in the world. It is a question of which shall predominate, which shall occupy our strength, moral and spiritual ends or critical studies? Any competent thinker can see that the moral and spiritual presents an infinitely better field for the development and display of real intellectual power, while the practical results are incomparably greater. While the call of the world remains what it now is, the most gifted and noble natures will continue to

respond as they have in the past. Absolute abandonment to the work of setting the world right may admit of a sideplay of the intellect in the pursuit of critical studies, but they never can acquire great prominence in the thought or life of such a man. We thus find a moral limitation, not a prohibition of the studies we are considering.

If we look at the subject from the standpoint of theology, a correlated subject, we discover another limitation to critical studies. We do not say a prohibition, but a limitation, a natural barrier. Theology, because of the dignity of the subject, the greatness of the themes, and the intellectual ability required in dealing with them, is "the queen of the sciences," the greatest of them all. The creation and production of theological thought is the highest exercise of the human intellect, the most taxing, absorbing, and capable of raising the mind to the highest enthusiasm and concentration of creative energy. The theological thinker is the embodiment of creative and constructive energy—a state of mind directly opposite to that occupied

by the critic, who reviews, estimates, and construes what others have produced.

It is important here to observe the distinction between the theological thinker and the theological scholar. The theological scholar is supposed to have a comprehensive knowledge of what other men have thought and taught in the realm of theology, and of the material which they brought to their support, while he may not in any true sense be a producer of theological thought. Such a mind, occupied with reviewing and estimating the productions of other minds, may find nothing in critical studies incongruous with its ordinary studies or habits of thought. They do not lie in the same field, but they face the same way toward religious life and literature, and their movement in the field of discussion is similar. The theological thinker glows, flames, and soars through vast fields of thought with an exhilaration and uplift of soul that renders him impatient with the dry details of critical studies, and ill disposed toward them. The theologian has not a very high opinion of the critic's work, nor is the critic over-

burdened with admiration for theological thinking. They feel with reference to each other's achievements about as mathematicians and poets do toward each other: their realms are so unlike one cannot appreciate the other. The mind will not be theological and critical at the same time. Theology opens the greatest of all fields to the mind of man, and whatever impinges upon it must give way.

Another limitation to the work of the critic appears when we come to consider the great practical features of religious truth. The exercise and development of faith requires as much thought and care, and intellectual activity of as high an order, as critical studies require, though of a different kind, and it has been known to produce much more beneficent and lasting fruit. The faith life is not the blind, irrational thing, the creature of impulse, emotion, and reckless thinking, which many seem to think it to be. It is closely logical and methodical in its procedure, and truly courageous in its action, for when it has posited an omnipotent Helper it is thoroughly rational to trust for anything, and

there is warrant for undaunted courage in any situation. It is not walking by feeling, impulse, or vision, but on the beaten highway of irrefutable logic. It rears structures, projects campaigns, wins victories, and claims kingdoms, giving little thought to origins and dates when once convinced that "the foundation of God standeth sure." It has been the conquering and creative force of Christian history, not questioning how or why, but going on with confidence and courage to do the Lord's will as led by him. It does not rest in technicalities, but in the living verities of God's manifestation to men.

Love is also one of those qualities of the Spirit that mounts, and soars, and sings, and serves, and overcomes out of the vital energies of its own nature drawn from the hidden sources of life, forever renewing and pluming itself with a sublime indifference to all the questions that occupy the critics. The great fountain of life lies open and is forever flowing, and true souls receive directly from it the satisfying elements of the better life; and if it must sometimes flow through artificially constructed pipes

of divine-human revelation, the water is so refreshing and satisfying that there is little disposition to quibble about the piping. What concord can a love-filled soul, singing its glad song of praise to the great God whom it knows, have with a carping, pessimistic critic who has lost his way groping through realms of darkness where there is no well assured path? It does not need to have origins accounted for; it derives life directly from God, with whom it is in a holy alliance forever, and its one business is to glorify the Maker of all and to lift up and save men by the forces of truth and grace that are now coming into the world. This is a realm of life above and beyond the reach of the critic, on which his shadow never falls; and if he sometimes sneers at it, he knows that it looks down on him with pity. The eagle, as it soars away toward the sun, is perfectly willing for the hop-toad to boast itself in its power of leaping if it can find comfort in that. This I say in all seriousness, for the hop-toad is as legitimate as the eagle, and his pride of leaping is as rational in the presence of the eagle as the self-vaunting of

the critic over his achievements in the presence of that great, shining company of conquering souls who are making the kingdom of God come by their heroic toil and overcoming faith. Who can define or expound that soul-hunger that went abroad seeking to save men in the great revival periods of the church's history? It was wholly apart from and inconsistent with the critical spirit that seems more anxious to interpret than to repeat the conquering epochs of Christian history. The critical spirit never did, nor can it do, these "mighty works" of the kingdom of God, by which men are regenerated and savage tribes transformed into civilized nations. The fervors of worship, the evangelizing impulse, and the missionary spirit naturally flow from love and occupy all the energies. The greatness of the subjective benefits of such a life in growth of intellect and personal power justifies the concentration of all the powers on it, and the beneficent effects of it upon others demand it of us as an imperative duty. The love-life and service will require more effort, independent thinking, heroism, and strength

of character, but for this reason and others its returns in the higher realms of life are richer than all that critical studies can give. It is an easy life to sit down and criticize the works of others; it is a heroic life to fight battles, effect changes, and found institutions that will affect coming generations. Criticism presupposes achievements, lives by those that are not its own, and requires not the active but the reflective attitude.

The thought I have endeavored to express in this chapter is that the professional scholar is bound by his calling to pursue critical studies to their limit, and that the intelligent pastor and Christian worker must keep himself informed as to the results of the best scholarly investigation, but the preacher or the productive or constructive thinker who turns aside to do the scholar's work, or who gives voice to hasty conclusions or undemonstrated propositions of critics, is disabling himself and putting his best work in peril. If these "limitations" seem like the prohibition of criticism itself, they are not so in fact. The full circle of truth on any subject will

have two segments looking in opposite directions, the one seeming to contradict the other, as is the case with "free will" in man and "divine sovereignty" in God, each of which at first thought seems to exclude the other. Think far enough to complete the circle of truth, and the different parts will be found consistent with each other.

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